

NOVEMBER 1995/£2.70/US\$5.95/CAN\$7.75

Sight and Sound

**WILL SELF ON SCREENWRITING
ROBIN SWICORD ON 'ALL ABOUT EVE'
LENA HORNE AND THE MUSICAL**



BEYOND SCANDAL
Larry Clark's 'Kids'
STYLE AND THE HOOD
Bogart to Tarantino
DARK AND DEADLY
film noir returns

OFF THE EDGE

Boys in the banlieue: the controversial new French film 'La Haine'

MDC classic music

Exclusive to MDC! Judy Garland

5CDs featuring highlights
from Judy's 1963-1964
CBS TV Series

50 Hits including
Judy's Most Memorable Songs

The Original Recordings



5 CDs
Only
£29.99

Only
Available
from MDC

Recorded From CBS Series



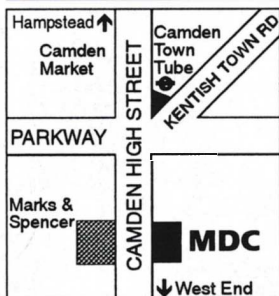
GREAT AMERICAN SONGWRITERS



5CDs
Only
£29.99

Great American Songwriters

featuring the Hit Songs of
Cole Porter • Irving Berlin
George & Ira Gershwin
Rodgers & Hart • Johnny Mercer



New Shop - Now Open
124 Camden High Street • NW1
Thousands of Bargains
Less than Half-Price!

● **Free Prize Draw!**
20 Walkman Portable
CD Players to be won

MDC classic music - London Shops

437 The Strand • WC2 0171-240 2157
1 Creed Lane • EC4 0171-489 8077
46 Thurloe Street • SW7 0171-584 3338
33-34 Rathbone Place • W1 0171-636 5850
124 Camden High St • NW1 0171-482 7097

ENO Shop & Video Shop
31/32 St. Martin's Lane • W1 0171-240 0270

MDC classic music - Mail Order
1 Creed Lane Tel: 0171-236 0060
LONDON • EC4V 5BR Fax: 0171-236 1160



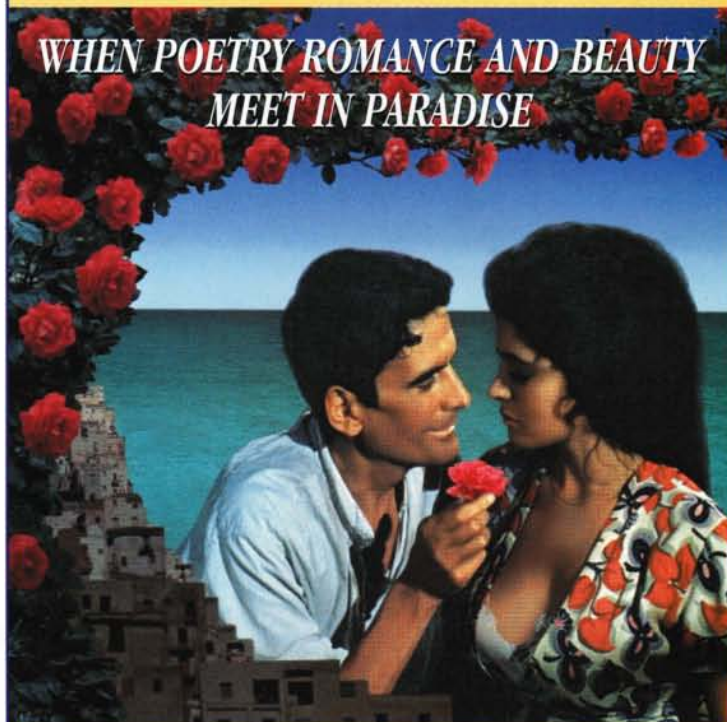
"WHAT A DELIGHT!"

A GORGEOUSLY FUNNY AND TENDER STORY
WITH MARVELLOUS PERFORMANCES.
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED."

ANGIE ERRIGO - PREMIERE

"A WONDERFULLY DETAILED ROMANCE
COMPARISONS WITH THE CROWD-PLEASER
'CINEMA PARADISO' WILL INEVITABLY ABOUND!"

ELLA TAYLOR - LA WEEKLY



IL POSTINO^U

(THE POSTMAN)

A shy postman didn't stand a chance with the island's
most beautiful woman until the great poet of love
gave him the courage to follow his dreams...
and the words to win her heart.

A MIRAMAX INTERN. TIO. L. RELEASE M. RIO & VITTORIO CECCHI GORI PRESENT A MICH. EL RADFORD FILM. PHILIPPE NOIRET M. SSSIMO TROISI
"IL POSTINO" ("THE POSTMAN") WITH MARIA GRAZIA CECINOTTA EXECUTIVE PRODUCER LIBERTO P. SSONE MUSIC BY LEIS ENRIQUE BACALOV
EDITOR ROBERTO PERPINI NI DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY FRANCO DI GIACOMO ADAPTED FROM BURNING PATIENCE BY NTOMO SKARMETA
SCREENPLAY BY ANNA PAVIGNA NO. MICH. EL RADFORD FILM O SCARPELLI GI. COMO SCARPELLI M. SSSIMO TROISI
PRODUCED BY MARIO & VITTORIO CECCHI GORI AND G. ET. NO DANI ELE DIRECTED BY MICH. EL RADFORD

AN ITALIAN-FRENCH CO-PRODUCTION CECCHI GORI GROUP TIGER CINEMATOGRAFICA - PENTAFILM - ESTERNO MEDITERRANEO FILM - BLUE DANIELA PRODUCTION
Distributed by Buena Vista International (UK) Ltd. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ARTWORK ©1995 MIRAMAX FILMS. Film Release Buena Vista International's MIRROR PLUS on the INTERNET: <http://www.bvi.com>

MIRAMAX SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON HOLLYWOOD RECORDS INCLUDING ORCHESTRAL SCORE AND READINGS OF C. ASSI C P. BLO. NERUDA POEMS

STARTS FRIDAY OCTOBER 20TH

MGM
TOT. CT. RD.
ADVANCE BOOKING
0181 970 6032

GATE CINEMA
NOTTING HILL GATE
TEL: 727 4043
PHONE BOOKINGS

The Screen on the Hill
0171-435 3366

METRO
RUPERT ST. W1
0171 4370757

RITZY
CINEMA
Brixton - 0171 737 2121

Barbican
0171-638 8891

AND AT SELECTED CINEMAS

Sight and Sound
(incorporating Monthly
Film Bulletin)
Volume 5 Issue 11 (NS)
Editorial office:
21 Stephen Street
London W1P 1PL
Telephone 0171 255 1444
Facsimile 0171 436 2327
Subscription office:
01858 468888

Editorial
Editor
Philip Dodd
Acting deputy editor
Nick James
Associate editor
Ian Christie
Acting associate editor
Leslie Felperin
Assistant editor
Rebecca Russell
Editorial assistant
Colette O'Reilly
Contributing editors
J. Hoberman, Pervaiz Khan,
John Powers, Mike O'Pray, Tony
Rayns, Jane Root, Amy Taubin
Sub-editor
Mark Sinker
Picture editor
Millie Simpson
Design and art direction
Susan Buchanan at
Esterson Lackersteen
Page make-up
Spy Graphics
Origination
Precise Litho
Printer
St Ives plc

Advertising sales
David Thomas
Telephone 0171 957 8916
Facsimile 0171 436 2327

Business
Publishing director
Caroline Moore
Publishing assistant
Nichola Bath
Managing director
BFI publishing
Colin MacCabe
Newsstand distribution
UMD, Telephone 0171 638 4666
Bookshop distribution
Central Books
Telephone 0181 986 4854
US distribution
2nd class postage paid at
Rahway, NJ, and at additional
mailing offices. Postmaster:
send address corrections to
Sight and Sound, c/o Mercury
Airfreight International Ltd Inc.,
2323 Randolph Avenue,
Avenel, NJ 07001
Subscription price is \$67.00
Newsstand distribution by:
Eastern News Distributors Inc.

Annual subscription rates
UK £31.50
Europe £38.50
US/Canada airspeed £38.50
Overseas surface mail £38.50
Overseas airmail £66.00
Special rates apply to BFI
members
Subscription queries
For subscription queries and sales
of back issues and binders contact
Subscription Department,
Sight and Sound
Tower House, Sovereign Park
Market Harborough
Leicestershire LE16 9EF
Telephone 01858 468888
Facsimile 01858 434958

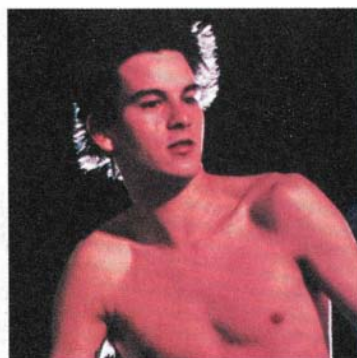
The British Film Institute exists
to encourage the development
of film, television and video in the
United Kingdom, and to promote
knowledge, understanding and
enjoyment of the culture of the
moving image. Its activities
include the National Film and
Television Archive; the National
Film Theatre; the Museum of the
Moving Image; the London Film
Festival; the production and
distribution of film and video;
funding and support for regional
activities; Library and Information
Services; Stills, Posters and
Designs; Research; Publishing
and Education; and the monthly
Sight and Sound magazine



SIGHT AND SOUND MAGAZINE
Published monthly by the
British Film Institute
ISSN 0037-4806

Sight and Sound

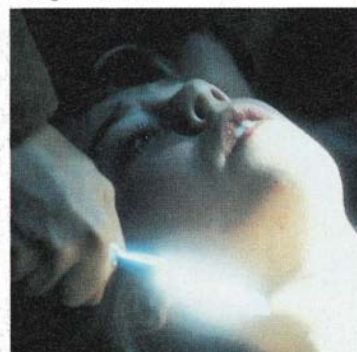
November 1995



'Kids': 16



'Shanghai Triad': 50



'Nightwatch': 48

Features

DUMB LUGS AND FEMME FATALES

Films such as *Pulp Fiction* and *Devil in a Blue Dress* are film noir with a twist, argues B. Ruby Rich **6**

AFTER THE RIOT

La Haine – meaning hate – is a controversial new French film, dealing with the violent city suburbs. Keith Reader reflects on the film and its power **12**

KIDS: BEYOND SCANDAL

Amy Taubin introduces Larry Clark's *Kids*, the fictional account of the sexual lives of US teenagers, much talked-about but, as yet, not seen in Britain **16**

THE KUBRICK CONNECTION

The dark-stained world of Kubrick's *The Killing* has been reinvented by the French director Pierre-William Glenn. Chris Darke talks with him **22**

STYLE AND THE HOOD

From Cagney through Belmondo to Tarantino, gangsters have been style victims. Stella Bruzzi investigates **26**

THE COLOUR OF ENTERTAINMENT

The great MGM musicals reveal more than delicious singing and dancing, argues Richard Dyer **28**

BOOKS SPECIAL

Will Self on screenwriting: pulp or literature? Plus the regular quarterly review of books on cinema and television **34**

Regulars

EDITORIAL Purity and prejudice **3**

BUSINESS Euro co-productions; Mega-mergers; Pam Grier **4**

OBSESSION John Dewe Mathews the artist on the film set **32**

LETTERS International humour; Englishness; overpriced video **64**

COVER Guy Ferrandis/
Jean-Claude Lother

Film reviews

Exquisite Tenderness	40
Farinelli Il Castrato	41
French Kiss	42
Haine, La	43
Haunted	44
Kaspar Hauser/Verbrechen am Seelenleben eines Menschen	44
Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin, The	45
Living In Oblivion	46
Mortal Combat	47
Nightwatch	48
Pidä Huivista Kiinni, Tatjana/ Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana	50
Postino, Il /The Postman	49
Postman, The/Il Postino	49
Shanghai Triad	50
Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana/ Pidä Huivista Kiinni, Tatjana	50
To Die For	51
Under Seige 2	52
Verbrechen am Seelenleben eines Menschen/Kaspar Hauser	44
Walk in the Clouds, A	53
When Night is Falling	54
NFT FIRST RUN	
23h58	55

Video reviews

Mark Kermode and Geoffrey Macnab on this month's video releases	56
PRIVATE VIEW Robin Swicord on <i>All About Eve</i>	59
END NOTES By Mark Kermode	62

**Next issue
on sale
14 November**



'Pulp Fiction': 6

BFI FILM CLASSICS

'Could scarcely be,
improved upon ...
informative, intelligent,
jargon-free companions'
The Observer



BFI Film Classics
are available from
selected branches of
Dillons and all other
good bookshops at
£6.99 each

BFI Publishing
21 Stephen Street
London W1P 2LN
Tel: 0171 255 1444

New!

An Actor's Revenge
Ian Breakwell

Queen Christina
Marcia Landy & Amy Villarejo

Wild Strawberries
Philip and Kersti French

The Ghost and Mrs Muir
Frieda Grafe

Odd Man Out
Dai Vaughan

Things to Come
Christopher Frayling

Centre for Language and Cultural Theory

Musicals

May 4th/5th, 1996

Papers are invited for an interdisciplinary conference on the Musical film which will take place at Southampton University on May 4th and 5th 1996. The conference is being organised by film specialists in English, Music and Modern Languages, and we hope that it will offer a forum within which those working in popular music, cultural studies and gender studies as well as film can come together to address recent work, in addition to setting an agenda for future developments. Papers on non-Hollywood musicals from different national cinemas, as well as on classical Hollywood films are particularly welcome, as is work on rock musicals, pop soundtracks, stars, choreographers, lyricists, songscoring, musical bodies, sexuality and spectacle, the television musical and contemporary transformations and adaptations of the musical.

Proposals should be sent to:

Linda Ruth Williams, Robynn Stilwell, Bill Marshall,
Centre for Language and Cultural Theory, Faculty of Arts,
University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ,
UK; tel: (+44) 01703 593406; fax: (+44) 01703 592859;

to arrive by November 30th, 1995.



**University
of Southampton**

"A tour de force
of wit, originality
and poignancy"



L.A. Times



KASPAR
HAUSER

18

a film by **PETER SEHR**

with **ANDRE EISERMANN UWE OCHSENKNECHT KATHARINA THALBACH**
UDO SAMEL JEREMY CLYDE HANSA CZYPIONKA CECILE PAOLI
HERMANN BEYER JOHANNES SILBERSCHNEIDER DIETER LASER DIETER MANN
PETER LOHMEYER ANJA SCHILLER TILO NEST Photography **GERNOT ROLL BVK** Music **NIKOS**
MAMANGAKIS Editing **HEIDI HANDORF BFS** **SUSANNE HARTMANN BFS** Costumes **DIEMUT REMY**
Production Manager **SUSANNE SCHLAEFFER** Producer **ANDREAS MEYER** Screenplay **PETER SEHR**
Produced by Multimedia Munchen for Bayerischer Rundfunk in co-operation with WDR, ORF, SVT, ARTE, TELEPOOL and the Bavarian LFA, Munchen.
DISTRIBUTION SUPPORTED BY  A PROJECT OF THE MEDIA PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
ARROW FILM DISTRIBUTORS LTD 

FROM FRI NOV 17

MGM **PICCADILLY**
0171 437 3561

EXCLUSIVE PRESENTATION

Purity and prejudice

Contributors to this issue

Stella Bruzzi is a lecturer at Royal Holloway College and is writing a book on film and fashion

Chris Darke is a freelance film writer and curator, with a special interest in French cinema

Richard Dyer is Professor of film at University of Warwick and is completing a study of film and whiteness

Keith Reader is Chair of French Studies at University of Newcastle upon Tyne

B. Ruby Rich is a Rockefeller fellow at the NYU Center for Media, Culture and History and supplied commentary for Channel 4's recent documentary on *film noir*

Will Self is a novelist and journalist. His collected journalism and cartoons, *Junk Mail*, is published by Bloomsbury

Robin Swicord's screenwriting credits include the recent *Little Women*

Amy Taubin is completing a study of *Taxi Driver*

It is a truth universally acknowledged that classic literature – such as the clever, richly-mounted BBC adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* – is the essence of quality British television. But should we weep if British film production is also becoming eager to adapt classic literature? Certainly it seems obvious that such a strategy is at the heart of a number of plans to revive British film production. Of the paltry £2 million allocated by the Arts Council to film production this year from National Lottery funds, by far the largest share was the £1 million given to an adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders*, to be made by Phil Agland (who made the *Beyond the Clouds* documentary series on China).

A glance at upcoming British productions confirms that period design experts and theatrical costumiers must be experiencing a boom. As if one Hardy were not enough, Michael Winterbottom is to follow his serial-killer road-movie *Butterfly Kiss* with *Jude* (from Hardy's study of defeat, *Jude the Obscure*). Adaptations of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and *Nostromo* are heading for our screens, as is Emma Thompson's version of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. What's more, the Royal Shakespeare Company has announced its first big cinema venture, with Adrian Noble to direct *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Kenneth Branagh is lining up *Othello* and *Hamlet*, and there are versions of *Richard III*, *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet* on their way, from a variety of sources.

As such classic adaptations are a recognisable British product and eminently exportable, they are undoubtedly easier to fund than those based on original scripts – which may be one reason for their popularity. Yet too many critics and reviewers automatically characterise the adapted classic as a retrograde form in itself, as if the very decision to adapt such a work is somehow the safer, more conservative option, being couched in ritual certainties. While this may sometimes be so, it is not always: as Renoir's Zola, Welles' Shakespeare and Satyajit Ray's Ibsen all testify.

But the most insistent argument used against literary adaptations is that they somehow deny or

dilute the visual possibilities of television and cinema. In his book *On Directing Film*, David Mamet (of all people) argues, following Eisenstein, that a film should ideally attempt to "tell a story in cuts", using uninflected images and the minimum of dialogue. But this is an old argument, which goes back to a time, before steadicam, when radio microphones and the coming of sound restricted cameras and actors (for years) to limited movement on studio sound stages. What Mamet ignores is that cinema emerged from a whole set of influences – Victorian melodrama at least as much as Soviet montage theory – and that wherever we look we can still see the links between cinema and all its sister arts, not least literature and drama.

That film can be purified of 'foreign elements' is an impossible dream, and undesirable if it were possible. As it reaches its hundredth birthday, at the centre of a cultural economy in which it feeds and is fed by the other arts, we should celebrate cinema's centrality. But rather than do this, the film community too often sits in a corner bemoaning the dependence on Great Literature (though oddly sympathetic to adaptations of pulp fiction). In another corner sits the art world, complaining that the work of young artists is increasingly dependent on movies (they wish to make film-related pieces, or films, or in the case of the young artist Douglas Gordon, to make an art work by adapting a film: his *24 Hour Psycho*). The truth is that we don't need to erect barriers between the arts, but to find fruitful ways in which each of the arts can find, when necessary, nourishment from the others.

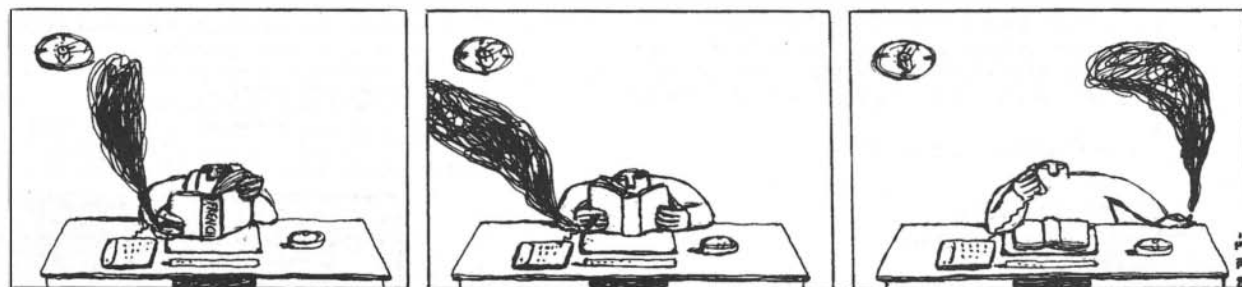
Six Shakespeare movies may be five too many (especially if they all arrive at once). But what will damn them won't be their being adaptations but their being poor films. There are plenty of these about – and not many are adaptations.

Apologies.

Owing to a technical glitch in the October issue, Lizzie Francke's article on Gena Rowlands was not credited to her.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, when you phone the film makers in Paris this is what you say: "J'aime votre movie, il avait les characters merveilleux, le plot très riche, l'amour hot! Je desire de fabriquer encore, une re-make sensitive pour Keanu et Sandra", that should crack it Jerry...'

The business

● This is the way European co-productions should happen. A couple of years ago, a Dutch producer called Hans de Weers took up a project that had been around for nearly half a decade: a film by director Marleen Gorris (*A Question of Silence, Broken Mirrors*), who had not made a film for the cinema since the failure of *Last Island*, an ill-conceived English-language film she directed in 1990.

The new film was from Gorris' own script and was called *Antonia*. It was – and is – an epic portrayal of ordinary life in a small farming community between the end of World War II and the present, centring on the title character and her relationship with her daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter. Everyone who read it loved it, but no one could figure out how to raise the budget – much inflated by the need to shoot in all four seasons – within the Netherlands, where over £1 million is big-budget.

De Weers already had a Belgian co-producer and was looking around for a third partner so as to make the project eligible for funding from the Council of Europe's Eurimages fund. The UK seemed a strong possibility, especially since Julie Christie had expressed interest in playing the lead. There were, however, two related problems: Christie didn't speak Dutch and was not prepared to be dubbed; and without her there just weren't enough British elements in the film to enable British Screen to become involved.

This is where the good bit begins. British producer Judy Counihan (whose previous credits include the Venice prize-winner *Before the Rain*)

worked with De Weers to solve the Christie problem (which they couldn't). Then, with the time running out for a September 1994 shoot (which would enable three of the four seasons to be covered within a realistic period of time), British Screen boss Simon Perry came up with a unique solution: he would put money into the film if the Dutch Film Fund would put an equivalent sum into a British film sometime in the future. Tracking down the Fund's chairman – who was actually on holiday at the time – Perry got his agreement to what is, he admits, an arrangement that falls well outside his usual guidelines. "But," he says, "this way, two films would get made instead of none."

Antonia (English title: *Antonia's Line*) was completed too late for selection for Cannes but was shown in the market there. The screening – organised by the London-based Sales Company – made Croisette history by being for women only. This was a move which not only caused ten times the publicity that would normally attend a market screening: it also targetted the distribution companies most likely to be interested in the film, nearly all of which are run by women.

Sales at Cannes were brisk and *Antonia* went on to win the audience prize at this autumn's Toronto Film Festival – the best possible award in terms of justifying everyone's faith in the project's potential, not just as a festival film, but with paying cinemagoers as well.

Most encouraging of all, however, was the fact that, at the end of September, the Dutch Film Fund



Licence to last: Pierce Brosnan is Bond in 'Goldeneye'

agreed to back the reciprocal British film: *House of America*, to be produced for September Films by Sheryl Crown and directed by Marc Evans, who directed the Jonathan Pryce/Theresa Russell telemovie, *Thicker Than Water* (1992). Production is due to start some time next year and the story – about a teenager trying to break free from the stifling atmosphere of a small Welsh town – has about as much Dutch content as *Antonia* has British.

We hear enough about the dreaded Europudding that comes out of letting the system determine the film. It's not often you hear of a Euroappetiser which comes from producers and national film organisations bucking the system to enable them to make something worth making.

So much for ideals. Now, back to the business. It being the policy of this column to keep readers up to date with each new

upheaval in the Hollywood firmament, Mr Busy would like to point out that the claim in last month's column that the takeover of the ABC television network by Disney resulted in the world's largest media company remained true for about a month and a half.

On Friday 22 September, after five weeks of negotiations, the board of Time Warner completed a \$7.3 billion deal to acquire Turner Broadcasting System, the parent of CNN, which itself acquired New Line Cinema and production company Castle Rock last year. The resulting conglomerate – which includes cable giant Tele-Communications Inc and Home Box Office as well as 'Time' magazine, Warner Bros, New Line, Turner Pictures Worldwide, the Cartoon Network and Castle Rock – is a media monster on a scale that few of those speculating on (for instance) Turner buying out the ailing Samuel Goldwyn Company could ever have dreamed of. They haven't finished adding up the asset-value yet, but the new company is clearly well ahead of the Disney/ABC link-up's \$50 billion.

One thing the merger clearly points to, in the wake of the acquisition of MCA/Universal by Canadian company Seagram (this column, June), is the waning of the once-feared takeover of Hollywood by Japanese capital. After a period in the doldrums, North America's own fat cats are very much back in the business of building their own empires.

Meanwhile, Japanese giant Matsushita (which used to own MCA) announced a second-quarter loss of \$1.32 billion at the end of August, compared to a profit of \$389 million this time last year. Matsushita bought MCA for \$6.59 billion at the end of 1990, then sold 80 per cent of it to Seagram in June for \$5.7 billion. If your calculator tells you that Matsushita made a profit of half a billion dollars on the deal (not much for a five-year investment), you should factor in fluctuations in the exchange rate. When Matsushita bought MCA in 1990, the dollar stood at around 130 to the yen. Last June, a dollar bought only 85 yen, which points to a loss of around 200 billion yen, or more than ten times the cost of 'Waterworld'.

● Now, Mr Busy has perhaps been over-hard on film production in Germany (it has the continent's most heavily-subsidised film industry).

One thing has been doing



Women at war: Marleen Gorris' *'Antonia'*, a real European co-production

spectacularly well in Germany recently: comedies. Most of them, of course – like the ones starring local comedians Uwe Ochsenknecht, Didi or Lörjot, or the late-80s smash, *Go, Trabi, Go* – defy export for much the same reason that Europe never took to *On the Buses*. Even the superior *Schtonk!* – the 1992 comedy about the forging of the Hitler diaries – bombed in non-German-speaking Europe.

The latest efforts show more sign of crossing frontiers, however, notably *Der bewegte Mann*, based on two successful gay comic books (but 'straightened' out for the movie) and *Abgeschminkt* (*Makin' Up!*), both of which starred Katja Riemann, who is currently so busy that one German commentator recently described her



Pam Grier returns

as a genre in her own right.

Riemann also stars in *Nur aus Liebe* (*For Love Alone*), a "romantic action-comedy" about a female taxi-driver who marries a Russian emigré for money, only to discover that he is a former member of the Russian mafia who has run off with the mob's plutonium-smuggling profits.

Warner Bros Film Deutschland put up 20% of the \$3-million budget, with the rest coming from Cologne-based Ena Film, the Filmstiftung Nordrhein Westfalen, the Brandenburg Film Board and the FFA (federal funding body). Production began on 1 August.

Great Sheds of Our Time, No 174. The recent decision of Eon Productions not to shoot 'Goldeneye' (this winter's Bond movie, with Pierce Brosnan new in the title role) at Pinewood may yet give the UK a new studio.

Relations between Cubby Broccoli and Pinewood – whose 007 stage (the world's largest) was named after the cinema's longest-running series – have been on-again off-again for some time (the last Bond movie, 'Licence to Kill', was shot in Mexico). The official story is that Pinewood didn't have the space available for Goldeneye, though some have suggested that the disagreement had more to do with price than space. At all events, the production built its own studio around the

disused Rolls Royce factory (and former WWII airfield) at Leavesden, between Watford and Abbots Langley to the north of London.

So successful was the shoot that there are now plans to turn Leavesden into a fully-fledged movie studio in direct competition with Pinewood. "Not only could you get more than three Pinewood lots on this site," says Goldeneye production designer Peter Lamont: "You could put the whole of Pinewood under cover." With the amount of US-financed production shooting in Britain on one of its current upturns, the 1.25 million square feet at Leavesden could well plug the gap left by the near certainty that Elstree will never again be a working film studio.

● Speaking of Elstree, the man who drove the final nail into the studio's coffin – Menahem Golan, who turned what used to be EMI (operator of Elstree in its heyday) into Cannon, then flushed it down the toilet – has bounced back yet again, though in a rather less glamorous setting than those of Cannon and his subsequent Hollywood production company, 21st Century Film Corporation (now bankrupt). After a time in Israel, Golan has teamed up with Berlin-based producer Artur Brauner (*Europa Europa*) to shoot a thriller called *Superbrain* in Minsk. Based on a daring real-life Berlin bank robbery, it stars Oliver Reed and young German actors Tina Ruland and Claus Obalski.

Don't hold your breath. Menahem's last major production – an updated version of *Crime and Punishment*, starring John Hurt, Vanessa Redgrave and Crispin Glover – has still to see the light of day.

Absent from the big screen for much, much longer – and much more keenly regretted – is 70s blaxploitation queen Pam Grier, star of such action movies as 'Foxy Brown', 'Coffy' and 'Sheba Baby'. Well, she's easing back into the limelight, though minus the trademark platform heels (on which she broke her ankle during one 70s stunt).

Watchers of 'Yo, MTV Raps' may perhaps have recognised her as Dr Dre's girlfriend in the video of Snoop Doggy Dogg's 'It's a Doggy Dogg World', and she has also guested on 'Fresh Prince of Bel Air'. She is also being courted by film-makers who must surely have broken the law if they saw her original films when they first came out: Quentin Tarantino, the Hudlin brothers and Tim Burton are all reportedly developing projects for her.

● Finally, Mr Busy must admit to having got a little lost in the maze of Italian politics. Franco Zeffirelli was elected, not as a member of the fascist Alleanza Nazionale, but for an alliance of right-wing parties known as The Alliance for Good Government. He is actually a Senator for Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia. Berlusconi's Fininvest was one of the co-producers of 'Jane Eyre'.

So, in a manner of speaking, Mr Busy was right, but a bit too right. Apologies.

ALIVE & ALIVE: THE
MIRACLE OF THE
ANDES
CITY SLICKERS
CHAPLIN
TOTAL RECALL
DANCES WITH WOLVES
PRIZZI'S HONOR
VERDI-LA TRAVIATA

APOCALYPSE NOW
THE FLINTSTONES
DEATH BECOME HER
BEVERLY HILLS COP 3
LENNY KRAVITZ - LIVE
FROM PLANET EARTH
MEATLOAF -
BAT OUT OF HELL II:
PICTURE SHOW
TCHAIKOVSKY - THE
SLEEPING BEAUTY
IN THE SUN

IN THE NAME OF
THE FATHER
INDECENT PROPOSAL
ADDAMS FAMILY
VALUES
CARL LINDA
IST
IT

A.W.O.L.
THE LOVER
MISERY
PET SHOP BOYS -
PERFORMANCE
HANDEL -
JULIUS CAESAR
NEXT OF KIN
TINA TURNER -
SIMPLY THE BEST
DEEP STAR SIX
AIR AMERICA

JUST A FEW OF THE BIG
NAMES YOU'LL
SEE ON LASER DISC.

LaserDisc™
THE
ULTIMATE
CUT

It's amazing what you see on
Pioneer Laser Disc.

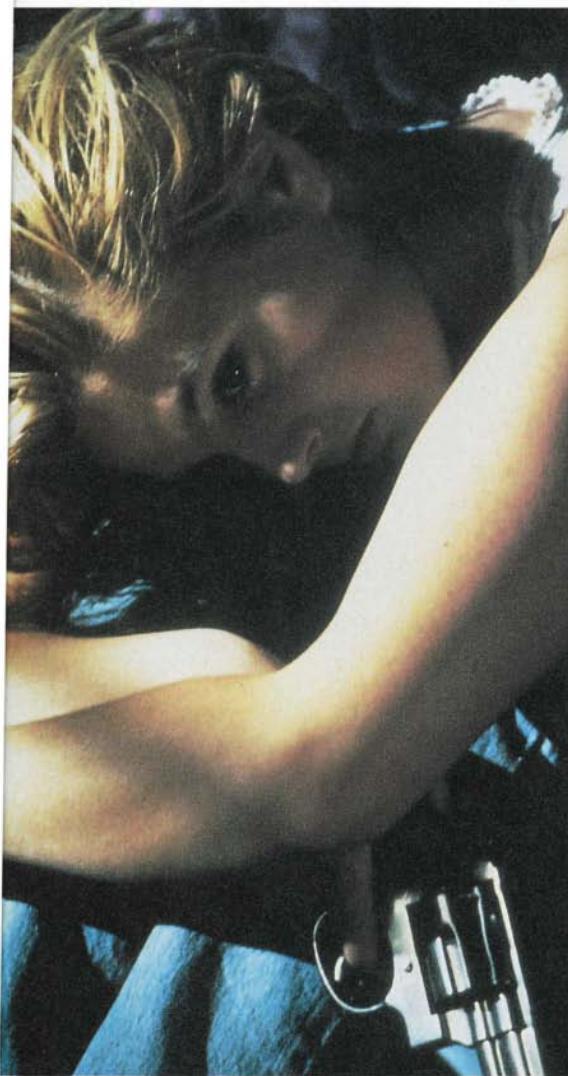
Everything comes to life with
unbeatable picture quality and CD
digital sound.

You'll see and hear the best in
films, popular and classical music
as well as operas and ballets.

To find all the big names or for
more information call our Laser
Link Line on 01753 789 635.

PIONEER®
The Art of Entertainment
PIONEER LDCE

TCHAIKOVSKY - THE
NUTCRACKER
CLIFF RICHARDS -
ACCESS ALL AREAS
THE TOUR 1992
1492: CONQUEST
OF PARADISE
CABARET
THE PAGEMASTER



DUMB LUGS AND FEMMES FATALES

Film noir is back with a vengeance, from 'The Last Seduction' to 'Devil in a Blue Dress'. But it's noir with a difference. By B. Ruby Rich

● The time is 1948, the place Los Angeles. Meet Easy Rawlins, a guy whose luck changed when World War II ended: back from the battles, dismissed from his job for the kind of insubordination necessary to retain some dignity, he's desperate for mortgage money to save the house that the GI Bill bought him. Enter a bartender who knows a guy who's got a friend who's in a jam and needs some help. Don't these films all start out this way? Just find this woman and you'll find yourself some "easy" money. Never mind why.

Soon enough, people start turning up dead, the hero gets jumped, and people are no longer what they seem, if ever they were. The blue sky and the palm trees turn threatening, and life itself shifts from the sunny certainty of day into the shadowing dangers of night. Daphne Monet is the ticket, but where is she and who is she, and can he find her in time, and if so, then what? When a man gets in that deep, he needs a friend, even if it's a trigger-happy pal from back home down south, way out of control.

Welcome to the terrain of *film noir* with a difference. The film is *Devil in a Blue Dress*, the writer Walter Mosley, the director and screenwriter Carl Franklin. Denzel Washington as Easy subdues his elegance in the service of *noirish* criteria for down-at-the-heels angst. Jennifer Beals plays Daphne as a *femme fatale*, but with a twist. The early *femmes fatales* had no explanation for their relentless pain or greed; Daphne's got one all right, and it's convincing, if nearly fatal. The setting is Central ►

Down-at-heel and lost in space: Denzel Washington in characteristic noirish pose in Carl Franklin's 'Devil in a Blue Dress', right; Drew Barrymore in 'Guncrazy', Tamra Davis' reworking of noir, above left

PHOTO: ZARREN



◀ Avenue, back when the hood was a neighbourhood, the heart of a thriving black metropolis that vanished everywhere but memory. Carl Franklin has definitively put the black back into *noir*. Reviewers have been citing *Chinatown* (1974), but that's all wrong: blood runs thicker than water in the Mosley/Franklin universe, black-and-white signifies more than film stock and, no, this time around, we can't all just get along.

The old paranoia of classic *noir* is intact in *Devil*, but race now colours the co-ordinates of the compass instead of gangsters or Cold War spooks. This is revisionist *noir*, backtracking to the 40s with one eye on the kind of scenario that the O. J. Simpson case must have been unreeling across town while *Devil* was in production. Corrupt politicians, racist cops, mayoral candidates with something to hide, all timeless elements that can fuel paranoia whatever the decade. Easy does track down Daphne, with the help of partner Mouse (the charismatic Don Cheadle), uncovering the underbelly of white Los Angeles in the process; doubly endangered whenever he leaves Central Avenue for white neighbourhoods or hotel rooms, he is our guide to a virtually *apartheid* Los Angeles and the rules it makes and breaks.

Franklin's earlier *One False Move* (1993) squarely belonged in the *Neo Noir* revival that's been exploding on the screens in recent years. To the extent that *Devil* has a "happy" ending, and to the extent that Tak Fujimoto's dreamily amber cinematography lets it go down as smooth as cognac with nary a trace of *noirish* rot-gut kick, it qualifies as a high-class Hollywood addition to 90s *noir*, an adjunct to rather than a member of *Neo*

Foley's *After Dark, My Sweet* (1990). Add *Black Widow* (1987), *The Grifters* (1990), *Basic Instinct* (1992), *Final Analysis* (1992), *Night and The City* (1992), *Ruby* (1992) and *Romeo Is Bleeding* (1993), and the contours begin to come into focus.

In *Neo Noir*, the women are irresistibly sexy and inexplicably evil, the men as dumb as they come and heading for a fall. No one can be trusted, everything is *déjà vu*, and happy endings aren't even a dream in anyone's head. The style is over the top, the camerawork flashy and giddily self-conscious, and the script tends to a certain smugness toward its own characters. Reviewing Elmore Leonard's new book earlier this year, Martin Amis wrote: "He understands the post-modern world, the world of wised-up rabble and zero authenticity." That, dear reader, is the universe of *Neo Noir*.

The politics of noir

To be sure, *noir* itself never died out in the first place. It's been one of the most enduring genres in the history of American, if not world, movies. Revivals of *noir* favourites have been a mainstay of repertory houses throughout the US for years, while periodic rewritings of the genre (*Chinatown*, *Body Heat*, 1981) have kept the tradition alive since its origins in the 30s and 40s. In the book *City of Quartz*, that brilliant meditation on Los Angeles, Mike Davis tried to pinpoint the nature of those origins. With a nose for cause-and-effect (not unlike the sheriff's wife in *One False Move* who discloses that "I read nonfiction"), Davis backtracks not merely to the traditional pulp touchstone, James M. Cain's novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, but to Lewis Corey's *Crisis of the Middle Class*

intoxicating delirium of film style.

Today, *Neo Noir* once again demonstrates the success with which cinema on occasion can marshal a handful of paradigmatic elements integral to its social moment and catalyse them into master narratives of crisis and resolution. No wonder it's so popular. Besides *Devil*, two television series are stimulating interest in the UK – Channel 4's *Dark and Deadly* series programmes a sampling of American *Neo Noir*, while the first Showtime series *Fallen Angels* (for US cablecast) has just been shown by the BBC. Why now? Well, one popular explanation for the first flourishing of *noir* held it hostage to its time: the postwar landscape was a whole new ballgame for those Americans who naively thought they'd triumphed over evil, then immediately identified a new evil empire called Communism. The paranoia of *noir* was the result: a world suddenly rearranged, a sucker punch from left field, and boom, Paul Schrader's "darkening stain" was spreading fast. Stunned by the end of the world as they knew it, Americans flocked to *noir* to pacify themselves with its equally tangled narratives and unreliable narrators.

Flash forward to the 90s, with a scenario not very different, apart from its reversals. In place of Corey's disenfranchised Los Angelenos, there are the angry militiamen of Waco and Oklahoma City. Instead of McCarthy, there's Newt. Instead of xenophobia – well, xenophobia. The end of the Cold War seems to have thrown the US into as much of a dither as its beginnings, old ideological formations are once again destined for the junkheap, and faith has gone missing. Whenever nobody can be trusted, society may disintegrate, but *noir* can flourish. Enter *Neo Noir* to rewire the genre's circuitry to the currents of the present, flashing across its screen some fascinating messages about the fears and dilemmas of our age.

Take women, for example. The *femmes fatales* of original *noir* had some kind of relationship to the brassy dames that flourished when the men were off to war, only to face banishment back to the kitchen and bedroom when their Johnnies came marching home. It doesn't take much feminist analysis to trace the short line from postwar gender regulation to *film noir's* embodiments of male fear and female treachery.

In *Neo Noir*, women are usually pure evil, with sexuality and greed the primary markers of character. There's some precedent, of course: the greedy scheming Laurie of *Gun Crazy*, who literally takes our hero for a ride, and the relentlessly curious Gabrielle of *Kiss Me Deadly*, whose greed carries a sinister price tag, are the foremothers of the *Neo Noir* broods. It's a small hop and a skip from Laurie/Gabrielle to the larger-than-life women embodied by Linda Fiorentino, Lena Olin, Lara Flynn Boyle, Theresa Russell, Kim Basinger, Annette Bening, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer. Their blood runs green, not red, as they sacrifice the men who cross their path to their insatiable and inscrutable quest for big money – and big-time betrayal. In *Kill Me Again*, John Dahl's early outing, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer sets up the role of duplicitous female that would be filled in future Dahl films by Fiorentino (*The Last Seduction*, 1993) and Boyle (*Red Rock West*, 1993); she plays a woman seemingly on the run from an abusive partner in crime, who enlists a small-town innocent to help her fake her own death in order to escape

Neo Noir is over the top, the camerawork flashy and giddily self-conscious. As Martin Amis wrote recently of Elmore Leonard: "He understands the post-modern world, the world of wised-up rabble and zero authenticity"

Noir. The period setting is as much a giveaway as the label: Franklin is faithful to Mosley's postwar setting, whereas the *Neo Noir* films are fixedly contemporary, borrowing mood and characters but never trappings or dates from their forefathers.

Neo Noir, qu'est que c'est? Well, consider that the *Devil* reprises the heady, atmospheric times of early classic *noir*: those lovely days of *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Double Indemnity* (1944), of Laura and Gilda and a Postman who always rang twice. The *Neo Noir* of the 90s, on the other hand, looks to the psychotic years of late *noir* (already tinged with parody and subversion) for its inspiration. Its power stems from those end-of-the-line dramas in which nobody at all could be trusted and not even the final frame held any explanation: films like *Gun Crazy* (1949), *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *The Big Combo* (1955) and *Touch of Evil* (1959) – the film that everyone fingers as the last of the line. *Neo Noir* picks up on the irrational universe embedded in these demonic narratives as fertile ground for the post-modern cultivation of our own *fin-de-siècle* nightmares. John Dahl (director of *Kill Me Again*, 1989) is its master, the Quentin Tarantino of *Pulp Fiction* its magician. But *Neo Noir* has an overarching reach; as a category, it can handily include Tamra Davis's *Guncrazy* (1992) alongside James

(1935), which explored the bankruptcy of Los Angelenos during the Depression-fed crash of real estate scams, oil speculation and land grabs, and their consequent sense of disenfranchisement. Corey seems to have hypothesised that the masses would turn either to fascism or socialism as a route out of their confusion, desperation and resentment. (Flash forward to Oklahoma City in 1995 for a suggestion of what's up next.)

With the world turned upside down, though, the movies were ready to give this topsy-turvy universe its due – and give the masses somewhere else to turn. "Noir," writes Davis, "was like a transformational grammar turning each charming ingredient of the boosters' arcadia into a sinister equivalent." *Noir* etched a metaphor of light and shadow into the popular psyche; rain-slicked streets, feelings of loss, fear, and betrayal; male bonding, *femmes fatales*, postwar malaise, atomic pressures, Communist threats, melodrama and gangsters all coalesced under its banner. Capone met Mabus in the darkness. As the genre developed and became, well, kinkier – and as US politics did the same, devolving into McCarthyism and xenophobia – *film noir* became a pressure-cooker of overheated desires and overwhelming drives, instincts pushed way past reason into an

together and start over. Naturally, it's not that simple. Though *The Last Seduction* has caught big-time critical attention, it's pretty flat and formulaic by comparison to *Kill Me Again*. It's fun to see Dahl putting the pieces together for the first time (let's see, try a bit of *Vertigo* here) and equally fun to see who's already cribbed from him: fans of *Reservoir Dogs* need to check out the scene of a psychotic Michael Madsen laughing and dancing around the character whom he tortures with a cigarette, then slits his throat with brio.

The women of *Neo Noir* may be inexplicably evil, but that's what audiences love about them. Their rapacious acts, their disregard for human life, their greed and lust and lack of restraint all elicit cheers and whistles of approval and enthusiasm. Their display of power, however depraved and unmotivated, is being accepted as a new version (albeit warped) of female empowerment, the dominatrix as a model of agency. So happy are audiences to find movies in which women chew up the scenery and trap the wimpy men that no one seems to have noticed that they're utterly lacking in subjectivity. After all, they usually get away with it in the end (the *Basic Instinct* model).

The dumb-is-good philosophy

The problem is that *Neo Noir* is an exception to the prevailing style of gender-bending fictions. Wolves in sheep's clothing, the new *noir* films trot out smart, treacherous *femmes fatales*, but the male patsies who seem to be no match for them at all turn out to be the sole repositories of authenticity. In a world of "wised-up rabble", smarts are inherently suspect. It's a post-modern universe in which people frequently know too much for their own good: if you're smart, you're liable to cause trouble. Dumbness, then, becomes the only marker of authenticity, the only guarantee of any integrity in a universe of shady deals and double-crossing comrades. Take *After Dark, My Sweet*, for example, which was actually based on a book by Jim Thompson. Jason Patric plays Collie, a guy who's escaped from a mental hospital only to find that the outside world is crazier and more dangerous yet. He falls in with a sexy widow (Rachel Ward) and her criminal ex-cop sidekick (Bruce Dern) who together manipulate him to kidnap a rich kid and get rich themselves off the ransom money. It all goes wrong, of course. But Collie, the dumb bastard so impaired that a random doctor can easily spot him, is the locus of integrity.

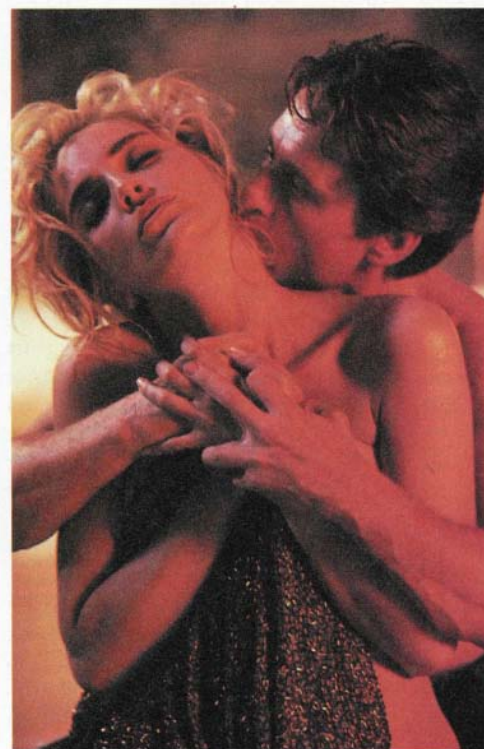
The dumb-is-good philosophy, of course, isn't unique to *Neo Noir*. Way back in the original Joseph H. Lewis *Gun Crazy* (1949), one character said to another: "You were born dumb." It wasn't a compliment back then, but today it seems to be. The 90s are full of dumbness, from *Beavis and Butthead* to *Dumb & Dumber* to *Forrest Gump*. The protagonists of *Neo Noir* are patsies just like they were in the old days of *noir*, but now they're ennobled by their idiocy, with the women in turn demonised (big surprise) by their intelligence. Collie is a washed-up boxer, after all (and boxing, in *noir* and *Neo Noir* both, is a reliable index of masculinity). Theresa Russell's victims in *Black Widow* may be rich men, but they're never shown as conniving or ruthless, only as lovable and swindled by her marry-for-money murderess. Even the psychiatrist in *Final Analysis*, who's weakened by lust and then duped by a pair of sisters into provid-



BHS STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS



Deadly women making their way in a man's world: Gaby Rodgers in Robert Aldrich's classic 'Kiss Me Deadly', top; Anjelica Huston



as a lethal player in Stephen Frears' 'The Grifters', above left; Sharon Stone in Paul Verhoeven's 'Basic Instinct', right

MOVIESTORE



Mexican noir: Charlton Heston in 'Touch of Evil'

◀ ing a fake alibi, plays the part of an idiotic but innocent victim of sinister entrapment, rather than an irresponsible professional violating his profession's code of ethics.

These dumb lugs are all accorded a morality denied to the women. At the same time, in a moment of crisis for masculinity in the movies, these dumb guys are real men. The bid for authenticity in the 90s is stupidity, as though you can only guarantee realness if you don't know any better and so are too stupid for cynicism. Dumb equals good, smart equals bad. But why? It's tempting to reverse the old *noir* logic and see the qualities in a national, not individual, context. According to this model, the United States would be the dumb lug who, post-Communism, can't figure out who or what he is or what he's supposed to do; feeling spurned and duped, all he can do is stumble on, clueless, in a world dimly perceived as dangerous.

Yet if *noir* the first time around was bent on

These dumb lugs are all accorded a morality denied to the women. At the same time, in a moment of crisis for masculinity in the movies, these dumb guys are real men. The bid for authenticity in the 90s is stupidity

capturing the instability of masculinity, now it seems equally determined to reinstate masculinity. The valorisation of stupidity is just a small part of that agenda. *Neo Noir* is a genre where a man is always a man, even if a woman isn't always exactly a woman (Sharon Stone's bisexuality and basic instincts, Anjelica Huston's oedipal drama in *The Grifters*, *The Last Seduction's* transvestite ex-wife). The destiny of these dumb men with sex-addled brains is to be set up by the greedy women whose paths they're fated to cross. Nor do they always triumph. Their assignment is different: to hold fast in a post-modern world of shifting significances, to reject dispersal and masquerade and therefore corruption, to be "themselves" in the absence of any other comprehensible rules.

The vacuum of authority is a key component for *Neo Noir*, signifying as it does its membership in post-modernism. Thus the reliance on quotation, homage, and appropriation, all elements that fuel the audience's pleasure and undermine the characters' claims to meaning. In *Pulp Fiction*, Tarantino doesn't so much quote past films as cast his actors, literally, as embodiments of their own past characters, rescripted, this time around, to be rewarded or punished for past behaviour (rewarded for his *Saturday Night Fever*-era sexiness,

Travolta gets to dance; punished for his years of on-screen machismo, Bruce Willis gets to talk babytalk and eat pussy; in the end, though, it's Willis who gets away). In *Guncrazy*, Tamra Davis cast Joe Dallesandro, the former stud of Andy Warhol's Factory movies, as a wasted jerk who rapes his old lady's daughter, played by Drew Barrymore, and therefore earns his death. As with Tarantino, it's the appropriation that grants the scenes meaning and deepens their emotional value, even though such pastiche is usually thought to do the opposite.

The arch synthesis of post-modernism turns out to work to *Neo Noir's* advantage, a point underlined by the *Fallen Angels* programmes. Most of the shows are based on earlier novels and set in the original *noir* era; they're interesting and smartly done, but they don't revise the genre like *Neo Noir*. Except for two. Significantly, these both recast *noir* as "outsider" dramas. In *Fearless*, Jim McBride directs a Walter Mosley script with an all-star triangle of Cynda Williams, Giancarlo Esposito and Bill Nunn, somehow infused with both sexiness and comedy; in *Professional Man*, Steven Soderbergh directs Brendan Fraser, Peter Coyote and Bruce Ramsey in a gay triangle of killer, boss, and victim, all of it filmed with stylish precision and paced with exquisite tension. Both scramble the elements of old *noir* to construct a post-modern equivalent, but they have no easy relationship to emotion: neither sentimental nor cynical, these programmes play with audience expectation and turn the viewers, finally, into the patsies up for manipulation.

Neo Noir can offer up cartoons, but it can also

surprise its audience with moral dilemmas and serious questions. *The Grifters*, for instance, goes down easy until things start to go wrong for its characters, at which point it becomes unexpectedly poignant, almost against its will. When serious subject matter fills its formulas, they become transformed – as, sometimes, do we.

Ruby is a good example: an oddball in the Channel 4 series, it wouldn't seem at first to be a candidate for *Neo Noir* at all. A docudrama history of the JFK assassination, *Ruby* reverses what the old *noirs* did to politics: they embedded their political narratives in the fairly melodramatic structures of the *noir* formulas, but *Ruby* embeds the *Neo Noir* elements in its real-life story of conspiracy, paranoia, betrayal, and disaster. Jack Ruby (Danny Aiello) is the epitome of the *Neo Noir* patsy-protagonist, dumb enough to get himself in way over his head and not smart enough to get out in time. With the CIA and the Mafia filling the bad-guy roles, *Ruby* enlists our *noir*-trained sympathies in a rereading of history; amazingly, it works.

A touch of race

Similarly, Carl Franklin's *One False Move* might seem to elude the new *noir* category. Not so. Race may have been virtually absent from the first

round of *noir* (and hardly more present in the contemporary literary landscape of detective novels, which have had a renaissance paralleling the revival of *noir*) but it has a singular capacity to reinvigorate the *noir* form. *One False Move* opened with a gang of violent drug-dealers running for cover after a big hit with their woman companion (Cynda Williams), who convinces them to go south so she can see her child; waiting there to catch them are some big-city northern cops and a small-town sheriff, whose connection to the case turns out to be more complicated than ever expected. *One False Move* seemed to offer itself up as one thing (urban ultraviolence) only to throw its audience for a loop with bold evolutions into more complex terrain (race crossing, urban/rural dynamics, mother-love, tragedy). In fact it echoes *Touch of Evil*, in that both explicitly repudiate audience expectations based on racism (against Mexicans in one, African Americans in the other) – and refuse the figure of a white sheriff as any bearer of rectitude, assigning integrity instead to people of colour (Charlton Heston's 'Mexican' detective, Cynda Williams' gangster-moll). It's in this sense that *Devil in a Blue Dress* can be seen to have been directed by the same man who did *One False Move* after all. Both films focus on dramas of good and evil, both believe that something momentous hangs in the balance, and both reject the casual nihilism that otherwise tends to accompany the *Neo Noir* project.

In the end, Franklin's films invert not merely expectation but the moral universe that they address. This arc of triumph (or defeat) may suggest an alternate moral development for *Neo Noir* – a route out of the grifters and dead-end futures that litter the byways of the genre. It's only made possible, though, by the deployment of an "outsider" identity – African Americans, non-fatal *femmes*, gays and lesbians – which *Neo Noir* has thus far been uninterested in taking on.

Channel 4's 'Dark and Deadly' series runs from 22 October to early December. 'Devil in a Blue Dress' is screened on 8 November as part of the LFF



Black noir: Cynda Williams in 'One False Move'

n i c o l e k i d m a n

She knew what it took to get to the top.
A lot of heart. And a little head.

TO DIE FOR.

"Slick, very funny... a consistently sharp satire...
Nicole Kidman excels."
GEOFF ANDREW - TIME OUT

"A wicked black comedy...
simply, perfection."
PADRAIG BROWNE - THE IRISH TIMES

Rank film distributors presents in association with Columbia Pictures
Laura Ziskin production a film by Gus Van Sant starring Nicole Kidman "to die for"
Joaquin Phoenix and Matt Dillon music by Danny Elfman writer Curtiss Clayton
production designer Missy Stewart director of photography Eric Alan Edwards executive producers Jonathan Taplin
and Joseph M. Caracciolo based on the book by Joyce Maynard screenplay by Buck Henry produced by Laura Ziskin
directed by Gus Van Sant released by Rank-Castle Rock/Turner in 1995 Columbia Pictures Industries. All rights reserved.

FROM FRIDAY
OCTOBER 27TH

MGM
HAYMARKET
ADVANCE BOOKING
0181 970 6016

MGM
TOTT. CT. RD.
ADVANCE BOOKING
0181 970 6032

WB
WARNER
WEST END
LEICESTER SQUARE
(0171) 437 4343

ODEON
MEZZANINE
—LEICESTER SQUARE—
0171 930 3232

MGM
BAKER ST.
—LEICESTER SQUARE—
0171 935 9722

ODEON
KENSINGTON
0171 371 3166

ODEON
SWISS COTTAGE
0171 722 5905

MGM
CHELSEA
ADVANCE BOOKING
0181 970 6010

The Screen on the Green
0171-226 3520

RITZY
CINEMA
BRISTOL 0117 737 8127

PICTUREHOUSE
CLAPHAM
0171 - 498 3323

PECKHAM
PREMIER
0171 732 1010

AND CINEMAS
NATIONWIDE

CALL  TALKING PAGES
0800 600 900

FOR FULL PROGRAMME
DETAILS, NATIONWIDE

HELP
"THE THIRD ROOM"
(An Independent Film For Cinema)
AND

MIX WITH THE STARS!

Sagittarius Productions are producing *a major psychological thriller for the cinema* and are asking for your help to realise a piece of movie history.

We already have *a named actor* and experienced team attached and we are looking for donations from **£25+** to help develop and produce *'The Third Room'*.

For your contribution you will receive *an official invitation* to join the director, cast, crew and other VIP's at *the first official screening* of the movie intended for cinema release in 1997.

Whatsmore, *if you donate £250 or more* you will earn the right to have your name *included on the film credits* !

Make your cheque or postal order payable to:

Sagittarius Productions Ltd
12 Drayton Court, Kingston Road, Surbiton, Surrey.
KT5 9PA.

THE LONDON INSTITUTE

Applications are sought for places on the following part-time postgraduate courses which enrol in January 1996

MA INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO

A course which is recruiting practitioners in film, video, installation work and related media, who wish to engage with critical and theoretical studies

MA SCREENWRITING AND SCREEN RESEARCH

This practice-based screenwriting/research course is still recruiting for the screen research part of the programme

MA PHOTOGRAPHY: HISTORY AND CULTURE

This course is recruiting photographers and others who are interested in the history, theory and criticism of historical and contemporary photography

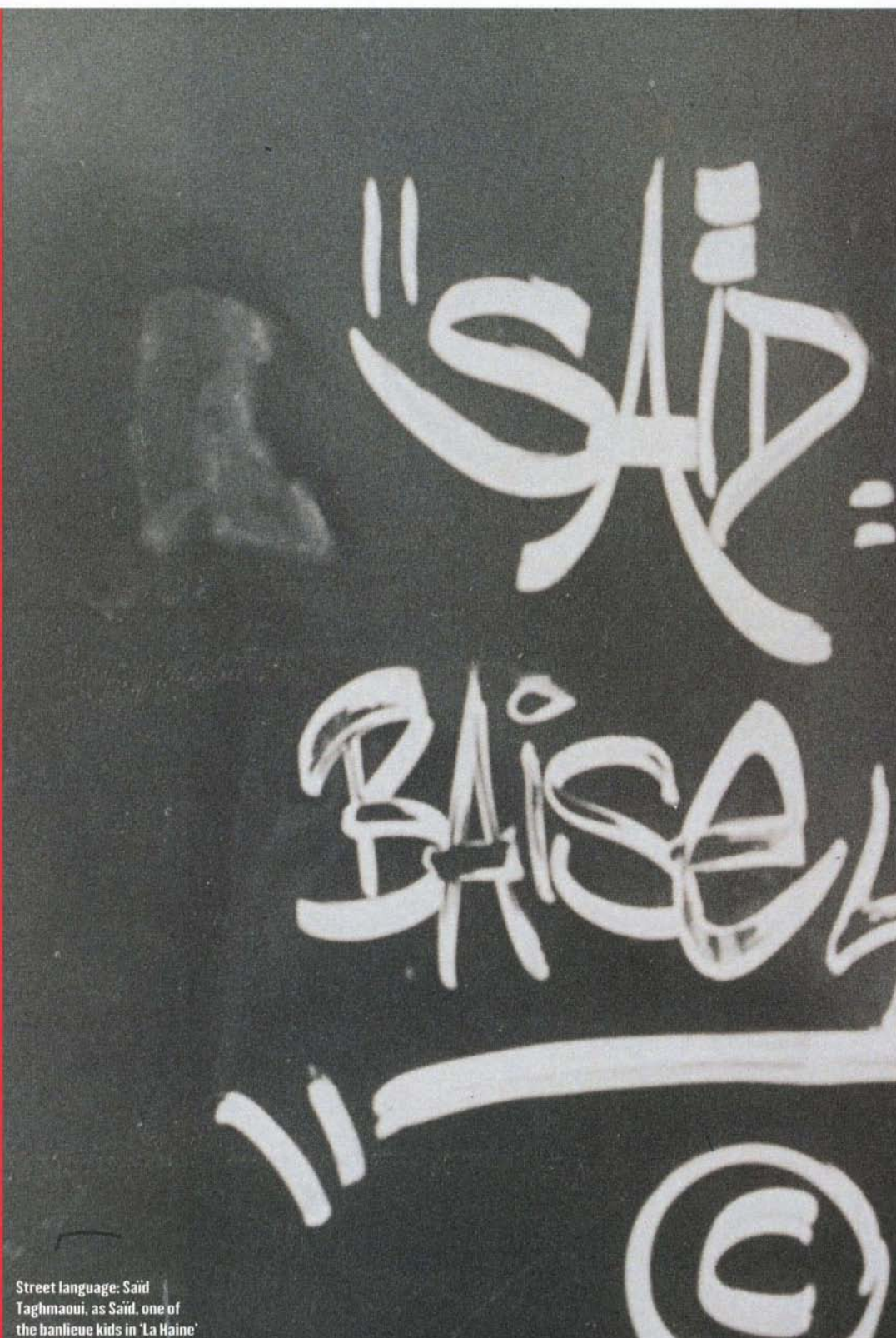
The deadline for applications is 13 November 1995

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT DIANE MARDEN
THE SCHOOL OF MEDIA, THE LONDON INSTITUTE
10 BACK HILL, CLERKENWELL
LONDON EC1R 5EN
TELEPHONE 0171 514 6500 EXT 6824

AFTER THE RIOT

'La Haine' – it means 'hate' – has been compared to 'Do the Right Thing'. Mathieu Kassovitz's searing account of life in the French suburbs is one of a series of violent 'banlieue' films explored by Keith Reader



Street language: Saïd Taghmaoui, as Saïd, one of the banlieue kids in 'La Haine'

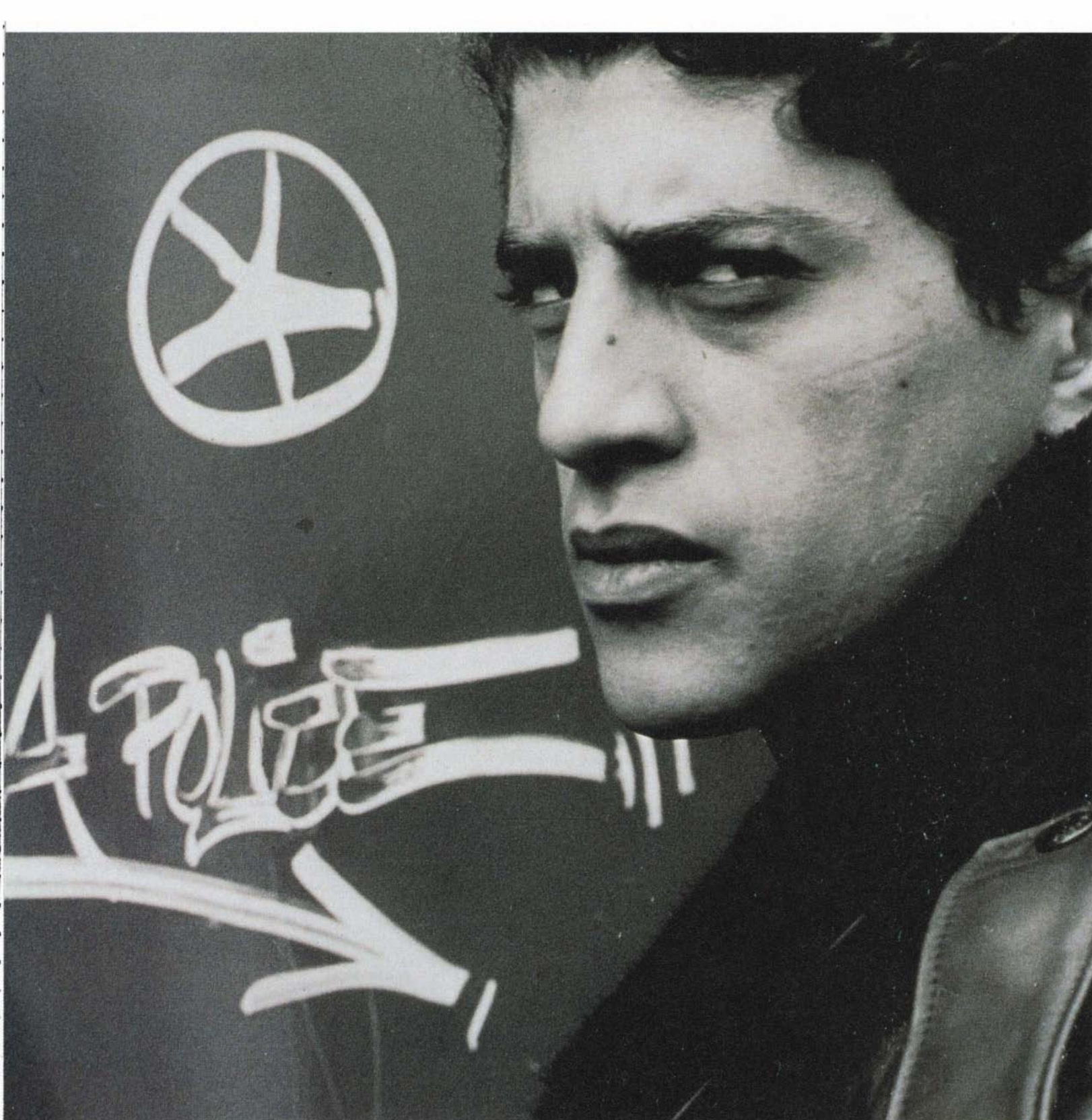
● The term "suburb", and even more so its derivatives "suburbia" and "suburbanite", have for a British public clear connotations of the respectable, the private – the *safe*. Not so these past 15 years or thereabouts in France, where the word *banlieue* has increasingly come to act as a shorthand for all the societal woes (or "fractures", as President Jacques Chirac has dubbed them) of the end of the twentieth century. The suburbs in question are working-class areas on the edge of large cities, debased instances of Le Corbusier's "towers in parkland", built from the early 60s to replace the *bidonvilles* or shanty-towns that had disfigured the Paris area in particular, and designed to house

workers near the factories in which they worked. This cut-price modernist vision did not long survive the impact of successive economic crises and the tendency for those who could afford it to move out to their own houses. The *banlieues*, and within them the *cités* or estates, are now often badly run down and house a largely unemployed young population with little hope or vision for the future, among whom drug-dealing, robbery, gang warfare and violence against the hated police are rife – though more rife in the French bourgeois imagination than in reality.

This world, and the varying subcultures that inhabit it, have in the past few months exploded

onto the screens of a French cinema that had seemed to have become bogged down a long way from contemporary social reality. The designer chic of such as Beineix and Carax has, if only because of the recent inactivity of its major figures, yielded pride of place to the "heritage film"; rarely has so restricted a diet of genres, for a British public at any rate, been on offer.

Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine*, winner of the Best Director prize at Cannes this year, has had a greater impact on French society than any film since Cyril Collard's *Les Nuits Fauves* (*Savage Nights*) of 1992. Collard's self-indulgent colour extravaganza is at the antipodes of *La Haine*, which is shot



in grainy black and white on invariably unlovely locations. Kassovitz's first feature, *Métisse* (1993), was compared to Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*. *La Haine* has similarly been compared to *Do The Right Thing*, and bears traces, too, of the influence of Scorsese. For almost the first time since the New Wave, French cinema shows signs of turning to the United States for its inspiration.

There has been much debate about whether there really exists such a thing as the "banlieue film", recent examples of which would include *État des lieux*, directed by Jean-François Richet, and *Rai* (after the musical genre), directed by Thomas Gilou. It would of course be foolish to pretend that

French culture has only in 1995 woken up to the existence of the suburbs. They were an important reference point for the novelist Céline, who drew on his experience as a doctor in the socialist Paris suburbs in the late 20s and early 30s, and Godard with his customary unnerving prescience made an estate outside Paris the setting for *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* in 1966. That film anatomised the suburbia of the consumer boom, the postwar period known in France as the *trente glorieuses* (the "30 glorious years"). Its central character, Juliette Janson (played by Marina Vlady), works part-time as a prostitute in order to subsidise her family's supply of consumer durables. So the *banlieue* is

already connected with unregulated or illicit economic activity, but of a kind associated with boom rather than slump.

Marco Ferreri's *La Dernière Femme* (aka *L'Ultima Donna*) of 1976 made the suburbs the setting for a more violent and threatening form of alienation, which culminates when the central character (played by Gérard Depardieu) castrates himself with an electric carving-knife. It was not, however, until 1981 – first of the "Mitterrand years", a period of great hopes and ambitions for French society – that the *banlieue* became the focus for more widespread anxiety, when rioting similar to that in British inner cities at the time broke out ►

◀ in the Lyon suburb of Vénissieux. The architect (and former Maoist) Roland Castro was commissioned by Mitterrand in 1989 to launch an ambitious programme of improvements (*Banlieue 89*), but with spiralling unemployment this rapidly came to be seen as cosmetic. The “long hot summer” of 1990 brought large-scale rioting, in the suburbs of Paris but most notoriously in Vaulx-en-Verin, on the outskirts of Lyon. High unemployment among young people of North African descent engendered a sense of hopelessness and anger that triggered the burning of cars and looting of shops – the former an echo of May 1968, the latter at the opposite extreme to May’s rejection of consumerism. Los Angeles and the Palestinian *intifada* were more influential, because more contemporary, pretexts. The *banlieue* had become what it has remained ever since – the concentrated essence of French society’s economic, ethnic and cultural anxieties.

The left-wing writer and former publisher François Maspero’s 1989 odyssey through the suburbs of Paris, *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* (English translation *Roissy Express*), strikingly foreshadows the themes that pervade *La Haine* and other *banlieue* films. The importance of the “gang” or “crowd” of friends, the self-enclosed way of life on the big estates, the anxiety about drugs, the poverty that makes up to half the households on certain estates unable to pay the French equivalent of council tax, the ugliness of the setting (“What is behind all this? There is never any depth” – *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*, p.59) are all there. A disaster, but also a cinematic phenomenon, waiting to happen.

La Haine recounts the aftermath of the ‘inadvertent’ death of a North African youth, shot by police during a riot. Police ‘blunders’ of this kind have become almost grotesquely common in the period under discussion. Of the film’s three central characters, Vinz is Jewish, Saïd North African and Hubert Afro-Caribbean – an ethnic mixture designed to emphasise the overriding importance of solidarity against the police. The French Interior Minister at the time *La Haine* was made, Charles Pasqua, was a hard-right populist and unconditional defender of the police, for whom he was an idol. It was thus not surprising that at the end of the film’s Cannes screening the police on security duty, reacting to Kassovitz’s remark that “*La Haine* is an anti-police film and that is how I meant it to be understood,” and his description of Pasqua as “that bastard who left behind him a trail of hatred,” turned their backs on the cast and crew.

Despite this, and despite the violent deaths with which the film ends, *La Haine* was remarkably well received across the whole of the French political spectrum. The soundtrack CD became a best-seller, 260 copies of the film had to be made instead of the usual 50, an exhibition of production stills and of young people’s responses to the film was mounted in the Parc de la Villette (the closest of the major Parisian exhibition venues to the *banlieue*), and in an ultimate avatar of radical chic the Monoprix supermarket chain even bid to launch a range of *La Haine* clothing – an offer Kassovitz had the decency to decline. A special screening for young people from the estate where the film was shot was organised at La Villette; many had never before been to the cinema. *Banlieue* cinemas screening the film reported enthusiastic reactions but also trouble – gatecrashing and

**Dangerous moments:
Vincent Carasel as
Vinz with the stolen police
gun and without mercy
in Kassovitz’s ‘La Haine’**



GUY FERRANDS / JEAN-CLAUDE LUTHER

fights breaking out. All this, of course, was grist to the mythical mill, with only a few dissenting voices – such as three young people sent to see the film by the weekly magazine *L’Express* for whom the central characters were “cretins”.

This general reception is – at first – surprising, given the film’s pessimism. The *banlieue* is presented as a desert, with no feeling of public space and precious little private space either; Paris, where Vinz, Saïd and Hubert spend almost half the film, is rejecting and alienatory. The trio are ejected successively from the flat of an acquaintance of Saïd’s (whom he appeared to have met in the world of male prostitution) and a private view at an art gallery, before being arrested and roughed up in the police station. There is no sexual activity other than a feeble attempt at a pick-up at the private view, nobody has a job, and even with a stolen credit card the trio lack the *savoir-faire* to get themselves back to base after the police have intentionally caused them to miss the last train from Paris. *La Haine* is a film about, to quote Olivier Mongin in *Esprit*, “the impossibility of developing an identity, personal or collective.”

This is much less true of the other two 1995 films I mentioned. *Rai* pits the heroin-addicted despair of one main character, eventually shot dead by the police after himself firing at random from the top of a block of flats, against his brother’s determination to better himself. That the brother does this by working as a swimming-pool attendant is a sobering indication of how gloomy the prospects for such as he are. The main female character, meanwhile, walks away from it all in the final shot of the film. *Rai* thus presents us with two ways out, integration through work, or escape (possibly through that of sex, given that Tabatha Cash, who plays the main female character, was France’s best-known hardcore porn star) – a more hopeful as well as a more conventional narrative framework than Kassovitz’s.

État des lieux differs from the other two films in the total absence of drugs from the narrative and its white workerist focus (though there is a hilarious scene between two young *banlieusard* blacks). The rough-hewn monochrome filming and intense physicality of the acting have caused Richet’s film to be compared to the work of Cassavetes, newly fashionable in France since a retrospective financed by Depardieu three years ago. The central character – played by Patrick Dell’Isola who also coauthored the script – works as a lathe-turner, at least until he is sacked for fighting with his bully-

ing foreman. The poster of Che Guevara on his bedroom wall, the quotation from Marx with which the film opens and the political rap songs that punctuate the narrative all suggest less a *banlieue* world than one inspired by the Situationists and May 1968. So too does the film’s final sequence – a scene of violently cathartic heterosexual passion evocative of the days when sex and revolution could, it seemed, be unproblematically equated. The *banlieue* is there right enough, however, its ugliness made even harsher by the coarse grain of the filming. Richet and Dell’Isola shot *État des lieux* for next to nothing, having staked their unemployment benefit in various casinos and struck lucky. This did not prevent Richet from declaring courageously in an interview that “the class struggle is important in a country like France, where there are more and more living in poverty and more and more stinking rich.”

The three films are thus very different, though each features a scene in which characters are turned away when they try to get into a night-club – an evident metaphor for wider forms of exclusion. That the most successful of them is also the most pessimistic is quite revelatory. Even the linguistic verve of *La Haine*, whose “stunning inventiveness of writing” is praised by the *Cahiers* critic Thierry Jousse, is scarcely more than a symbolic pole of resistance, aestheticising despair by its almost poetic use of slang and *verlan* or “back-slang”. Gérard Lefort, in one of the few hostile reviews (in *Libération*), hints at the deeper reasons for the film’s success when he observes that it “hits the right spot in a country still groggy after the coronation of Jacques Chirac.” Ideological and political exhaustion, and the feelings of powerlessness it brings in its train, are even more marked in contemporary France than elsewhere in the West, if only because of the hopes raised by the early Mitterrand years. The election of an old stager such as Chirac to the presidency is symptomatic of this crisis, a crisis to which his fulminations on Bosnia draw attention as much as they seek to conceal it. It would be obscene to describe the *banlieue* as France’s “Bosnia within”, but both figure a besetting sense of hopelessness to which *La Haine* also speaks. It, and even more so perhaps *État des lieux*, are excellent films, whose revitalising effect on the French cinema was long overdue. That that revitalisation springs from a deeper sense of exhaustion is not, however, something to be forgotten.

‘La Haine’ opens on 17 November and is reviewed on page 43 of this issue

FILMFEST

FILM FORUM UK HAS BEEN FORMED TO BRING YOU OBSURE AND UNDERATED FILMS, AND THE FILM MAKERS. WE START WITH AN INFORMAL MEETING OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BETWEEN SCREENINGS OF 4 UNIQUE BRITISH FILMS FROM MAVERICK FILM DIRECTOR LINDSAY SHONTEFF.

LICENCE TO LOVE & KILL

(80's Bond send up with GARETH HUNT)

HOW SLEEP THE BRAVE

(Early 80's award winning precursor of other Vietnam War Movies with LAWRENCE DAY)

NUMBER ONE GUN

(90's Comedy Spy Film with CLEO ROCOS)

THE RUNNING GUN

(The BRITISH PREMIERE of this 90's Western with LAWRENCE DAY)

£25

Inc. Membership and Admission

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 19th 12.00 am - 10.00 pm

COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE, 230 KENSINGTON HIGH STREET, LONDON

A DAY OF DIVERSE FILMS, WITH MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS IN THE ON-SITE COFFEE SHOP AND BAR. TALK WITH FILM DIRECTOR, LINDSAY SHONTEFF, WHO HAS WRITTEN, PRODUCED, DIRECTED, EDITED AND SOLD HIS OWN FILMS WORLDWIDE DURING A CAREER WHICH SPANS 30 YEARS. HOW DOES HE KEEP GOING? WHY DOES HE KEEP GOING? WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR THE INDEPENDENT FILM MAKER? HIS ANSWERS MAY SURPRISE AND SHOCK YOU.

NOT TO BE MISSED BY ANY FILM BUFFS OR STUDENT FILM MAKERS – ITS WHAT THE BUSINESS IS ALL ABOUT BY SOMEONE WHO IS THE BUSINESS.

Tickets available from:

Film Forum UK PO Box 3035 Wokingham RG41 5YN

Please make Cheques and Postal Orders payable to "FILM FORUM UK"

European **Script** Fund

CONGRATULATES THE FOLLOWING
FILMS SCREENING AT THE 39TH
LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

KOREA

SAT 4 NOV, 6.15PM NFT2

BURNING LIFE

TUE 7 NOV, 9.00PM NFT1

THE PROMISE

FRI 10 NOV, 2.00PM & 6.30PM NFT1

GOD'S COMEDY

SUN 12 NOV, 10.00AM ODEON 1

BYE BYE

THU 16 NOV, 2.00PM & 6.30PM NFT2

BEYOND THE CLOUDS

SAT 18 NOV, 9.00PM NFT1

ALL DEVELOPED WITH THE SUPPORT OF
THE EUROPEAN SCRIPT FUND.

EUROPEAN SCRIPT FUND,
39c Highbury Place, London N5 1QP,
UNITED KINGDOM.
T +44 171 226 9903 F +44 171 354 2706

AN INITIATIVE OF THE MEDIA PROGRAMME
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

MEDIA

● The first image we see in Larry Clark's *Kids* is of a teenage girl and boy, framed in tight close-up, sucking face. The light is limpid, the focus shallow, so shallow that it's as if there's nothing else in the world but these two kids going at it, tongue to tongue, without passion, but with deep dedication. It's an image that simultaneously hits one in the face and draws one in. And it goes on for a very long time, long enough to make one aware of a couple of crucial things: that although this is undeniably a film image (what else could it be with all that grain dancing around on screen) the kids seem incredibly real (in other words, not like actors); that they also seem very young – she looks barely 14, he might be two years older; that the activity they are performing is not simulated (these kids might never kiss each other in actual life but on screen that's just what they're doing); and that the position the film has placed us in *vis-à-vis* this activity is uncomfortably close.

This shot, which seems to last forever but might be as brief as 20 seconds, gives us time to become self-conscious about our own response as we confront the activity that most adults want to shove out of sight, or at least turn into an abstraction. Pubescent sex, that's what we're looking at.

The close-up is followed by a slightly more distanced shot. Now we can see that the two are on the bed in the girl's room. It's a pretty room filled with objects (stuffed animals and Beastie Boys records) signifying a privileged upbringing (it's money that gives her skin that golden glow) and confirming that she's as young as we feared she might be. The narrative kicks in. The boy Telly is pressing the girl to have sex. He's insistent, she's ambivalent. The pace of the editing accelerates. The third shot is notably eccentric. The hand-held camera finds the heart of the matter – the crotches of the girl and the boy still covered by underpants. It's the kind of image that makes you wonder if you've seen more than you've seen.

Eventually the girl acquiesces to the boy's single-mindedness. He climbs on top of her. There's a jump cut that breaks the real time continuity, rushing us forward as we realise that he's penetrated her. We see them from the waist up: he's pounding away and she's protesting in pain. And then the music kicks in – jammer, jammer, jammer – and above it we hear the boy's voice-over: "Virgins, I love 'em...."

An adrenalinising movie moment, its kick is as much the result of precise timing and layering of sound and image as it is about what is happening in the action. Stylistically, it's the opposite of the *verité* images that precede it. And although the action has turned nasty, it's somehow easier to take than that first kiss. The "movieness" of it is pleasurably reassuring. It carries us along, out of our skins and out of our minds. Not like that first shot which, by giving us time to wonder about just what was going on, put the whole scary mess of teen sex in our laps, made us anxious by forcing us to be aware of ourselves watching something that's forbidden. Is this art or exploitation? And who's been caught looking?

Kids was first unveiled at a midnight preview at the 1995 Sundance Film Festival. Some critics claimed it a masterpiece (including yours truly); others thought it exploitative and misogynist. Opening unrated, it has drawn a tremendous

In-your-face teenage sex is the subject of Larry Clark's 'Kids'. Amy Taubin introduces the film and talks to the director about a project which some want banned in Britain

CHILLING

AND VERY HOT

amount of coverage, sharply for and sharply against. It follows a looseknit group of New York teens through a single hot summer day. There are three main characters: Telly, who dubs himself the virgin surgeon and is obsessed with 14-year-old cherry; Casper, Telly's best buddy, a pothead skateboard ace who's as confused as Telly is determined; and Jennie, who lost her virginity to Telly and has just discovered that she's caught HIV from him. The narrative has a bare-bones minimalist feel. Rich with incident, dialogue and behaviour, it's almost devoid of plot. Telly's predatory desire for fresh pussy drives it, taking him on a journey across Manhattan from the wealthy enclaves of the Upper East Side to the scuzzier corners of Washington Square and the bohemian East Village.

After Telly splits the bedroom of this first conquest (triumphantly depositing a gob of spit on the dining room parquet floor), he ambles off with Casper, who's eager to hear all the details of his friend's amorous adventure. "Oh, man," says Casper, sniffing Telly's fingers. "It smells like butterscotch." "Hell yeah, she was so clean," says Telly and continues his riff on the joys of fucking "little baby girls".

The pair shoplift a couple of beers, stop off to get high at a nearby crash pad, then grab a sub-way downtown to look for Darcy, a 13-year-old

who, Telly hopes, will be his second virgin of the day. Just around the time Telly focuses his fantasies on Darcy, Jennie is at the health clinic, getting the bad news that she has HIV, contracted from Telly when he deflowered her in her first and only sexual encounter. For the rest of the film, Jennie searches for Telly to tell him that he's HIV-positive and to stop him before he claims another victim.

Telly goes home to steal a few bucks from his mom, who's too preoccupied with her new baby to notice what he's up to. Casper gets turned on watching Telly's mom breast feed the baby. He and Telly horse around, spritzing each other with water and playing with mom's tampons. Then they go to the park to cop a blunt and hang out with their friends. Casper, who by now is completely wrecked, goes for a spin on his skateboard and crashes into a black dude who's not part of his crew. Casper and the dude get confrontational. Harold, the only black kid in Telly and Casper's inner circle, wacks the stranger's head with his skateboard – as if to prove that loyalty to one's friends takes priority over loyalty to one's race. In a flash, half a dozen kids descend on the stranger and beat him to a pulp. Casper administers a vicious final kick and everyone splits not knowing if the victim is alive or dead.

Telly finds Darcy and with Casper and some of



the others they go for an after-hours swim at the local pool and then on to a party at the apartment of a kid whose parents are away on vacation. About two dozen kids are already sprawled around, drinking beer, smoking dope, and groping one another. Four little kids, who can't be more than 11, share a joint and observe the goings-on. By the time Jennie arrives, the worst has happened. Telly is already fucking Darcy. When he shouts at her to get out of the bedroom, Jennie, who's zonked on ecstasy – administered as a panacea by an admirer at the Rave Club where she vainly looked for Telly – gives up and falls into a stupor along with everyone else. As dawn breaks, Casper, still stoned, hauls himself out of the bathtub where he's spent the night and spies the sleeping Jennie. "Don't worry Jennie, it's only me, Casper", he says as he pulls down her jeans and clumsily rapes her. Jennie only vaguely grasps what's happening to her and even if she does, she's too numb and still too much in shock to object.

All the sex talk, all the groping and kissing, all Casper's admiration and envy of Telly's prowess have lead to this horrifyingly brutish but banal act. The moment has a tragic inevitability that few films achieve. And like the opening seduction, it seems to take forever, leaving one time to feel as helpless as the semi-conscious Jennie, and

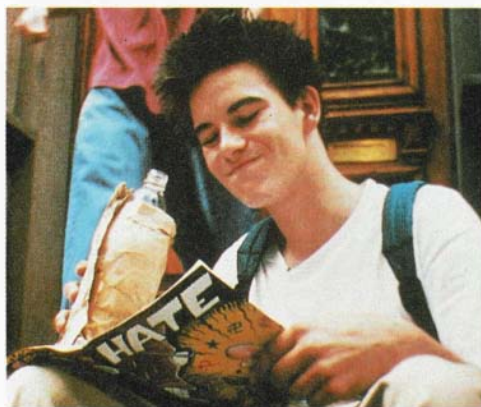
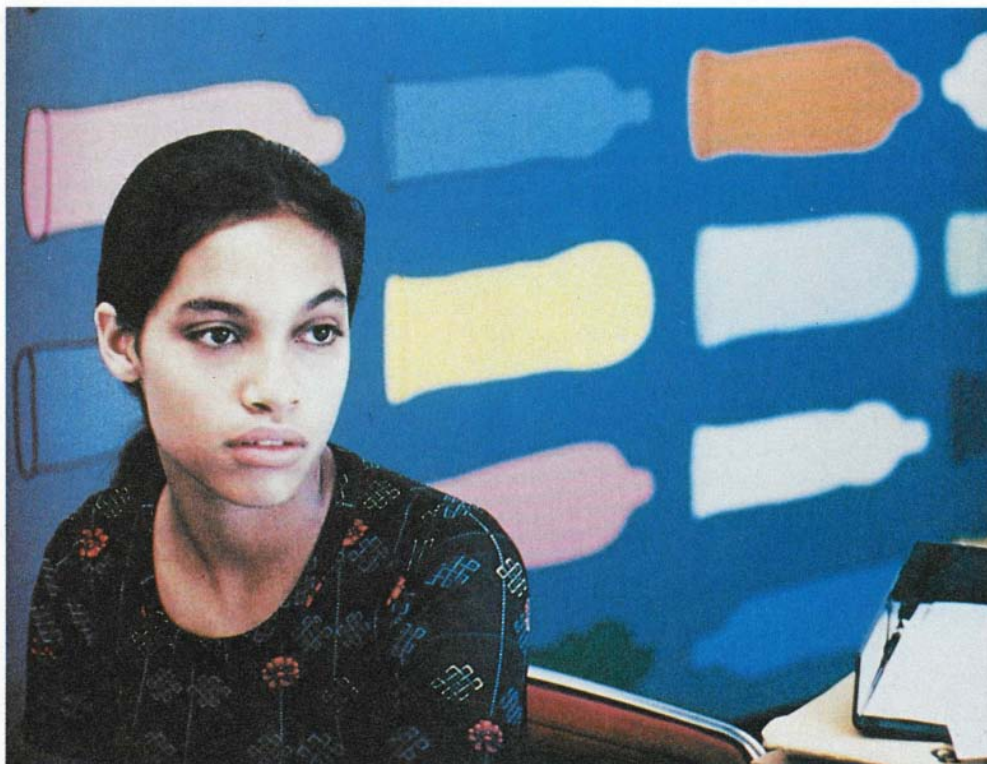
perhaps (if one is totally honest) slightly turned on. The final twist of desire in a simple narrative trajectory (Jennie searching for Telly who's on quest for virgin flesh) binds Casper to Jennie and Telly in a ghostly triangle. Fucking makes Telly and Casper feel immortal. Only Jennie knows they're all already dead. At the end of the twentieth century, the connection of sex and death is no longer a romantic metaphor or a by-product of Judaeo-Christian guilt. It's a fact of life.

Shaped as a cautionary tale for the age of Aids (although unsafe sex is merely the latest wrinkle in the history of adolescent self-destruction), *Kids* still comes down on the side of teenagers as sexual beings. The film is both chilling and very hot. The adolescent libido that fuels Casper's violence and Telly's predatory seductions, that makes the kids heedless of one another and of themselves, is also the source of their spontaneity, their feverish energy, their mad humour, their extravagantly blunt language. Raging hormones have them jumping out of their skins. They're mean, sordid, hungry and radiant at the same time. The boy's aggression and the girls' acquiescence aren't pretty but they're real. They may not be everykid, but everykid has fears and desires like theirs – even if they never act on them. Indeed, *Kids* is the first movie in which teenagers seem like actual teenagers 98 per cent of the time.

There's nothing in the film that should surprise teenagers, or for that matter adults who haven't disavowed the memory of their own adolescence. It's simply that it's never been up on the screen before. Not this close-up, sustained, and relatively unadorned. In that sense, it's a revelation.

Although *Kids* focuses on a particular teenage, urban, 90s subculture, it suggests that adolescent socialisation is less determined by culture than biology. These kids are not running amuck because they're watching too much MTV (the only TV images in the film are home videos some skateboarders made of themselves). Jolted out of childhood by their body chemistry, they desperately forge their sexual identity with only their peers for guidance. There are no adults around to suggest that living for the moment is the surest path to an early grave. Telly's mom seems nice enough, but she's too exhausted by keeping a roof over her family's head to deal with his teenage craziness. The health-care counsellors are too overwhelmed by the horror of teenage Aids even to look their clients in the eye. After Jennie finds out she has HIV, she calls home from a payphone, sobbing over the screaming noise of the traffic, "Where's Mommy, where's mommy?"

In *Kids*, adults are sufficiently present to show how much they've absented themselves from teenagers' lives. The problem is not that kids ►



Kids world: Rosario Dawson as Ruby at the clinic, top; Justin Pierce as Casper, bottom left; four 11-year-olds look on, bottom right

◀ behave badly but that adults turn away when kids don't conform to their expectations. And even well-intentioned adults would feel more comfortable if teenage sexuality could disappear. One would not have to deal with long-suppressed memories of desire and despair. Nor with the paedophilic implications of one's own desire when confronted with a kid who can't help throwing her/his sexuality in one's face. *Kids* refuses to allow teenage lust to remain invisible.

But what kind of person would devote his life to training a camera lens, like a microscope, on adolescent sexuality? *Tulsa* (1971) and *Teenage Lust* (1983), the photographic books that won Clark his art-world reputation, both fetishise the fragile glamour of young bodies yearning for obliteration. Certainly, there's an element of perversity in the enterprise – a perversity which Clark compulsively flaunts. One can't look at a Larry Clark photograph without some feeling of anxiety about the obsession of the man behind the camera – and about the degree to which his desire, fascination, and identification mirror one's own? Clark's work compounds voyeurism and exhibitionism. Through the intensity of his gaze, he throws attention back on himself.

What's most disturbing about Clark's work across the board is that his subjects, by virtue of

their youth, are extremely vulnerable (though I doubt that Clark, who attributes enormous power to a particular type of boy beauty, would see it that way). What makes it great is that it claims attention for teen sexuality, or at least teen boy sexuality. It doesn't make polite conversation about it; it puts it right in your face.

"I always wanted to make the great American teenage movie," says Clark. "The kind of film that's real immediate, like Cassavetes' *Shadows* but in 1994. I didn't want to make a documentary. I wanted to make a film that could play in malls across America."

Clark is a thoughtful, serious 52-year-old man with a touch of the military in his demeanour (he was drafted for Vietnam in the mid 60s). He seems a surprisingly sweet man and also a person who runs on anger. In lots of ways, Clark doesn't compute – but it's worth noting that he seems comfortable being an adult. Even when carrying a skateboard, there's nothing kid-like about him.

We're talking about how close *Kids* seems to *Tulsa*, Clark's first book. Shot between 1963 and 1970 and published in 1971, it's an insider's look at the teenage Oklahoma drug culture (guys with needles in their arms and their dicks hanging out, guys and guns, with a couple of women thrown in for good measure). "I wanted my first

film to be like my first book – a straight narrative shot documentary style. When I first laid out *Tulsa*, I had put in pictures of people looking at the camera and then I realised that in movies, no one looks at the camera so I took them all out. It was my little trick to make it all look like a movie." In fact, he tried in 1970 to turn it into a movie; but he found the 16mm synch rig too cumbersome to handle by himself. For the next 10 years, he says he was too strung out on drugs to pick up a still camera let alone a movie camera. It was during this period that he did time in jail for shooting a guy during a card game. Of the shooting, he says, "I was doing speed, so it seemed like the right thing to do."

In the early 80s, he started to think seriously about making a film about the teenage experience. He had married and had a son (he has three children altogether – a daughter who's now in her twenties, an 11-year-old son and a nine year-old daughter). He had somewhat cleaned up his act. He tried working with several writers but nothing panned out.

Clark got the idea for *Kids* during the summer of '92 when he was photographing skateboarders in Washington Square Park. "It was what I called the summer of condoms. When I would go to the park they would be giving out these condoms and all the kids had them and they were always talking about safe sex and condoms and I was convinced. I was skating so I could keep up when I took pictures of them, and my son was skating a bit. So after about six months, I'm just one of the guys, they're just totally open and honest with me, and I find out no one is using condoms. Hence the safe sex thing is 'Let's have sex with a virgin.' And when I'd say, 'What if she gets pregnant?' they'd just say, 'That's not meant to be.' But the girls do get pregnant and they have abortions and their mothers never know. And some of them get herpes the first time they have sex. You could make a list of the things that can happen to you the first time you have sex."

"Back in '92 when they were having the rave scene, these 14- and 15-year-old girls were coming from uptown, they were from richer families, and they'd go to these raves and take acid and mushrooms and stay out all weekend. And they'd plan these cover stories so their parents would think they were at a slumber party.

"When people ask me what they should take away from the film, I say they should try to look their kids in the eye and talk to them one-on-one. I mean I'm a parent, but we don't have a clue. We forget what it was like when we were kids.

"I knew skaters [his vernacular for skateboarders] would be the best actors. They have a style and a presence. Everyone hates skaters so they're forced to be tough and confrontational. They're kicked out of every place, the police hate them. They're kind of outlaws."

Still, Clark might not have been able to make *Kids* had he not discovered Harmony Korine. Korine was 18; he'd been a skater for five or six years. He gave Clark a cassette of a film he'd made in high school and told him about a short film script he'd written about a kid whose father took him to a prostitute on his thirteenth birthday. Some months later, Clark asked him if he'd like to write a script about skaters, suggesting only that it be about a kid whose way of having

safe sex was to fuck virgins and that there be something in it about HIV. The script that Korine delivered three weeks later remains largely intact in the finished film.

Korine provides *Kids* with his insider point of view. More than accurate, his dialogue – direct, vivid and hilariously filthy – has a lyricism born of teen lust and teen angst rolled into one. The symbiotic relationship between Telly and Casper provides psychological density. It's the angry, envious Casper rather than the goal-oriented Telly who's the entry into the inchoate emotional landscape of the film. (Both Korine and Clark claim to identify more with Casper's confusion than Telly's purposefulness.) And surprisingly, given the film's male orientation, Jennie is no third wheel. Looking out the window of a cab as it hurtles through the twilight, Jennie knows that she's been ambushed, that she's fucked, that she's going to die. That knowledge, and her utter desolation in the face of it, shifts *Kids* from comedy to tragedy in an instant.

But most of all, Korine's spare, modernist structure is exactly what Clark needed to anchor his images. Clark and cinematographer Eric Alan Edwards (who also shot Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho*) devised a fluid, basically handheld camera style that relies to an astonishing degree on available light. Responsive to the kineticism of its subjects, the camera follows their movement at close range without calling attention to itself. (The brief moments toward the end when the film tries to aestheticise the kids, panning oversprawled sleeping bodies as if they were Botticelli angels, is glaringly wrong.) The image is radiant, eroticised by light; the kids look lit up from within. The combination of natural light and handheld camera movement yields miraculous moments when the angle of the light and the rhythm of the camera coalesce with the gesture of an actor.

It's the use of available light – at a moment when most Hollywood films seem overlit – that gives the image its documentary quality. There probably were fewer movie lights used in *Kids* than in recent Godard films. And like Godard, Clark zeroes in on what is latently documentary in the fiction film.

While the camerawork provides the sense of rawness and immediacy, the editing of image and sound is fine-tuned and polyrhythmic. *Kids* is a great New York City film; its vibrant sense of place owes as much to the direct sound recording as to the camerawork. (Telly and Casper screaming smut over the Second Avenue traffic; Jennie, crunched up on a bench, letting the noise of the Rave Club wash over her.)

Ten years from now, what I suspect will be most striking in *Kids* are the performances: the rhythms of the kids' behaviour, their contagious energy. The kids in *Kids* are neither the perky kids of sitcom nor are they much like the teen movie idols from James Dean to River Phoenix. For one thing, they're impulsive rather than introspective. They physicalise their feelings rather than brood about them. And they're so fast – with their bodies, words, emotions. They're 17- and 18-year-olds playing 14- and 16-year-olds, which is very different from 23-year-olds playing 16-year-olds. How did Clark get such vivid performances from young and totally inexperienced actors?

"I just knew them real well and they trusted me so they were willing to relax and go with the lines. They could change a word or two if it was more comfortable, but they had to stick to the script. In a way they were like method actors, they really felt what they were doing. And because I knew them, I knew how I wanted them to be. They didn't know, but I did. All these little bits of business, they're things I'd seen kids do. So there was that 'Come on, jump up and down, laugh more, keep laughing,' whatever it takes. The tough ones were the sex scenes because it was like giggle time."

The truth of the film is in these behavioural specifics: the sudden flashes of Casper's anger; the way Telly stretches out the word "ass" so that it becomes an adenoidal cry of defiance; how kids jockey for position on a bed, in a room, on the street. The kids' behaviour speaks to the teenage urgency of claiming one's sexuality, of finding a sexual identity that's acceptable to oneself and one's peers (and parents be damned); to the sense that the world is suffused with one's inchoate desire, that sex is the ultimate place to find and lose power, that everything is sex – whether you're getting any or not.

Clark's insistent scrutiny of that behaviour makes *Kids* seem like a revelation. But the film is hardly *sui generis*. It's traced with teen films as disparate as *Sixteen Candles* and *The 400 Blows* (*Les Qua-*

'Kids' is a great New York City film; Telly and Casper screaming smut over the traffic; Jennie, on a bench, letting the noise of the Rave Club wash over her

tre cent coups). Clark just looks closer and harder. (The film *Kids* most resembles is Alan Clarke's *Christine*, one of Korine's favourites – although he didn't see it until after *Kids* was shot.)

At least once a decade there's a film that causes a ruckus by zeroing in on what the next generation is doing: *Blackboard Jungle*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, *Splendor in the Grass*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Over the Edge*, *Menace II Society*. Most of them deal with violence rather than sex. Only *Splendor in the Grass*, which seems quaint and even silly today, risks showing the disruptive aspects of sexuality and repression. Given that context, and the current hysteria around child abuse, it was inevitable that *Kids* would cause a stir.

It will be a long time before anyone will be able to see it as that Sundance audience of 300 did, with no expectations to get in the way. From the first, the film acted as a Rorschach blot, and the critical reception was all over the map. But almost immediately, conversation was displaced from *Kids* itself onto the conditions surrounding its release. It was as if the film, like its subject, was so threatening it couldn't be examined directly. Everyone speculated about the age of the actors. (Producer Cary Woods insists that "the casting is age appropriate. The kids in the sexual content scenes are 17 and over. The other actors

range from 13 to 72." And so far, no one has proved otherwise.) Everyone wondered if Miramax, which had bought world-wide rights for an extravagant \$3.5 million, would be allowed by its parent company Disney to distribute the film. Miramax was contractually bound by Disney not to release NC-17 films, and no one – except Clark – believed that *Kids* would receive an R.

A few months later, *Kids* was shrugged off by the press at Cannes, a reaction that probably had more to do with the hyperbole that had been lavished at Sundance and also with Miramax's strong-arm tactics than with the film itself. Miramax's hope that the imprimatur of Cannes would prove that the film was art rather than exploitation was frustrated and the MPAA ratings board branded *Kids* with an NC-17. "If I had thought it would get an NC-17, you can be sure I would have gone a lot further," commented Clark after the rating was announced.

Unfazed, Miramax sold *Kids* to Shining Excelsior, a company it created on the spot to deal with this and all future NC-17 problems. Rather than accept the MPAA recommendation, Excelsior opened *Kids* unrated which gave exhibitors the freedom to set any age limitations they pleased. That didn't rule out the possibility of some ambitious DA hauling a theatre owner into court on charges of showing pornography to minors, but as yet, that hasn't happened.

Miramax had been burned earlier this year by the reaction of the religious right to Antonia Bird's *Priest*. Various groups threatened to boycott Disney if the film were not withdrawn and one theatre even received a bomb threat. Everyone expected that *Kids* would draw the same kind of fire. Instead, it's been totally ignored by rightwing activists. Which is startling, considering the degree to which children (and legally speaking adolescents are children) have become political pawns of both the left and the right.

As at Sundance, the film drew an immense amount of press. Rather than examining *Kids* for its contradictions (the contradiction between the cautionary tale and the flaunting of raw sexuality; the contradictions inherent in realism as a genre), many critics saw only one aspect or another. Either it was a grim morality lesson and a tool to open dialogue between parents and children, or it was a Beavis and Butthead-like exercise in crude'n'lewd. Either it was an accurate depiction of contemporary adolescents or a paedophile's wet dream. These kids were either every kid who ever lived or a perverted minority (godless New York scum). They were either emblems of the multi-culti melting pot or racist creeps. There was a need to identify with the film completely or reject it wholecloth and, also, a demand that it bear a burden of reality to which no film could measure up.

But beneath all the commentary – positive, negative, smugly indifferent – whether from adults or from kids themselves, one could sense that people were disturbed. In part, it was that the film took the behaviour that turns up as statistics on the nightly news and shoved it right in one's face. In part, it was the old Larry Clark question: isn't there something suspicious about a 50-year-old man looking obsessively at the sexuality of adolescents. To which I can only respond: isn't it just as suspicious to turn one's head?



SKY'S 100 GREATEST MOVIES

This winter the choice of films we are offering across our three movie channels is better than ever. Our season of 100 Great Movies is a testament to this. In particular, we are proud to include a strong line-up of home-produced award winners, including Jim Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father* and Anthony Hopkins in *The Remains of the Day* and *Shadowlands*. It is not often realised that we are a major contributor to the British Film Industry-last year BSkyB contributed over £13 million to 40 British film productions - more than any other television service. We are also a patron of The National Film and Television School, and early next year we are screening a selection of student films from the Royal College of Art. ...and we're not closed for Bank Holidays.

David Elstein

Head of Programming, Sky Television



This month, Sky television are launching what is probably the biggest season of films ever broadcast on UK television.

As the nights grow longer, Sky's substantial and eclectic season of 100 quality movies makes an alluring home entertainment package, showcasing for potential subscribers the benefits of Sky's three Movie channels: Sky Movies, The Movie Channel and Sky Movies Gold. The season runs from 19th November until January 20th and manages to pack all 100 films into just 63 days, with at least a film a day.

It opens with Steven Spielberg's special-effects blockbuster *Jurassic Park*, and culminates on January 20th with the UK premiere of Tony Scott's bittersweet road movie *True Romance*, a tongue-in-cheek mixture of guns and gags scripted by Quentin Tarantino. The season ranges right across the board of cinema classics, and includes such contemporary landmarks as Jane Campion's *The Piano*, John Dahl's *The Last Seduction* and Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* as well as such ground-breaking films of the 70s and 80s as Richard Attenborough's heartfelt history *Gandhi*, Stanley Kubrick's chilling masterpiece *The Shining* and George Lucas' brilliant space epic *Star Wars*, and the UK TV premieres of *Philadelphia* and *Mrs. Doubtfire*.

Outstanding films from the golden age of celluloid are also featured, including the original (and superior) *Cape Fear* (with Robert Mitchum at his most sinister), Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (the greatest film of all time according to the *Sight and Sound* critics' poll), James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart in the archetypal gangster movie *The Roaring Twenties* and Errol Flynn in the exhilarating romp *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. The season also contains a neat mini-season of five of Billy Wilder's finest.

An impressive selection of recent British films, including Richard Attenborough's overwhelming emotional tour de force *Shadowlands*, the

Merchant/Ivory team's understated study of the declining class system *The Remains of the Day* and the powerful political drama of the Irish/UK co-production *In the Name of the Father*, complements such classics of Britishness as Attenborough's *A Bridge Too Far* and David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*.

For dedicated movie-watchers, a major advantage of Sky's three movie channels is that there are no mood-breaking commercials during the movies. Sky is also the leading broadcaster of movies in Dolby stereo and many widescreen movies are shown in their original format. With two of the channels running 24 hours a day, and all three running 365 days a year, subscribers can watch movies at any time they want to, as movies are shown more than once to suit everyone's different lifestyles, so there's rarely a reason to regret that missed opportunity.

During the rest of the year, Sky broadcasts over 450 different films per month with a commitment to one UK TV premiere a day. Perhaps the biggest advantage that Sky's movie channels have, though, is that 90 per cent of the top 100 cinema releases appear on Sky a year ahead of network television. Sky's three channels also have six regular film programmes providing up-to-the-minute news on the industry, plus in-depth interviews with directors, producers, technicians and stars. They regularly feature set reports, updates on the US and UK cinema top tens and reports from film festivals around the world, in fact Sky are also sponsors of the closing night gala of this year's London Film Festival featuring the premiere of Martin Scorsese's *Casino*.

Coming up, Sky will be the first in the UK to screen the new series of *The X-Files*, *Due South*, *Star Trek Voyager* and *Murder One*, the new killer series from Steven Bochco of LA Law and NYPD Blue fame. As for the 100-movie festival, you can judge its quality by taking a look at the list.

A Bridge Too Far
(Richard Attenborough, UK 1977)

A Bronx Tale
(Robert De Niro, USA 1993)

A Few Good Men
(Rob Reiner, USA 1992)

A Fish Called Wanda
(Charles Crichton, UK 1988)

A Hard Day's Night
(Richard Lester, UK 1964)

A Perfect World
(Clint Eastwood, USA 1993)

Ace Ventura: Pet Detective
(Tom Shadyac, USA 1994)

Addams Family Values
(Barry Sonnenfeld, USA 1993)

The Adventures of Robin Hood
(Michael Curtiz/William Keighley, USA 1938)

The Age of Innocence
(Martin Scorsese, USA 1993)

Aliens (James Cameron, USA 1986)
Arguably the best of the *Alien* trilogy, James Cameron's roller-coaster ride permanently raised the quality of blockbuster all-action movies, and surpasses even Ridley Scott's original suspense classic *Alien* in its celebration of primal fears. Sigourney Weaver's iconic action woman redefined our idea of the movie heroine.

All of Me
(Carl Reiner, USA 1984)

Angels with Dirty Faces
(Michael Curtiz, USA 1938)

The Apartment
(Billy Wilder, USA 1960)

Belle de Jour (Luis Buñuel, Fr/Italy 1967)
A masterpiece of deadpan drollery, *Belle de Jour* makes a dreamlike conundrum out of housewife Catherine Deneuve's secret life as a prostitute. For a movie which analyses bourgeois absurdities with an amused detachment, *Belle de Jour* could not be more erotic.

The Big Chill
(Lawrence Kasdan, USA 1983)

The Blues Brothers
(John Landis, USA 1980)

Bram Stoker's Dracula
(Francis Coppola, USA 1992)

Cape Fear (J. Lee Thompson, USA 1962)
Thompson's chilling swamp-set thriller has Gregory Peck's upstanding lawyer finds his family threatened by a man he put away in prison. The ex-con, played with reptilian nastiness by Robert Mitchum on top form, bides his time before striking, leaving Thompson to build tension with a brilliance that Martin Scorsese couldn't match in the recent remake.

Carlito's Way
(Brian De Palma, USA 1993)

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
(Ken Hughes, UK 1968)

Citizen Kane
(Orson Welles, USA 1941)

City Lights
(Charles Chaplin, USA 1931)

Cliffhanger
(Renny Harlin, USA 1993)

Cocoon
(Ron Howard, USA 1985)

The Conversation
(Francis Coppola, USA 1974)
Francis Coppola is not best known for his quiet films but this study of a professional eavesdropper, drawn into a bloody corporate war, is among his best. A masterpiece of understatement and irony with Gene Hackman matching the mood with a performance of great subtlety.

Demolition Man
(Marco Brambilla, USA 1993)

Dressed to Kill
(Brian De Palma, USA 1980)

Duck Soup
(Leo McCarty, USA 1933)

El Dorado
(Howard Hawks, USA 1966)

The Firm
(Sidney Pollack, USA 1993)

First Blood
(Ted Kotcheff, USA 1982)

The French Connection
(William Friedkin, USA 1971)

The Fugitive
(Andrew Davis, USA 1993)

Full Metal Jacket
(Stanley Kubrick, UK 1987)

Gandhi
(Richard Attenborough, UK 1982)

Goldfinger
(Guy Hamilton, UK 1964)

Groundhog Day
(Harold Ramis, USA 1993)
A dazzling script conceit has Bill Murray's weatherman condemned to repeat one day of his life endlessly until he gets it right. The repetition is handled with such pazzaz that you can't help being charmed and the dialogue is as sharp and funny as they come.

Guns of Navarone
(J. Lee Thompson, UK 1961)

Hellraiser
(Clive Barker, UK 1987)

High Society
(Charles Walters, USA 1956)

Husbands & Wives
(Woody Allen, USA 1993)

In the Line of Fire
(Wolfgang Petersen, USA 1993)

In the Name of the Father
(Jim Sheridan, Ireland/UK/USA 1993)

Jailhouse Rock
(Richard Thorpe, USA 1957)

Jaws
(Steven Spielberg, USA 1975)

Jurassic Park
(Steven Spielberg, USA 1993)

The Killer
(Mark Malone, USA 1994)

Kind Hearts and Coronets
(Robert Hamer, UK 1949)

King Kong
(Merian C. Cooper/Ernest B. Schoedsack, USA 1933)

The Last Action Hero
(John McTiernan, USA 1993)

The Last Seduction
(John Dahl, USA 1993)
Director John Dahl updates the dark pleasures of film noir with this deliciously twisting story of a ruthless, femme fatale bent on using up every man that comes between her and the money she craves. As the anti-heroine, Linda Fiorentina shakes a killer cocktail of sex and power.

Lawrence of Arabia
(David Lean, UK 1962)

Live and Let Die
(Guy Hamilton, UK 1973)

Manhattan
(Woody Allen, USA 1979)

Midnight Cowboy
(John Schlesinger, USA 1969)

Mrs Doubtfire
(Chris Columbus, USA 1993)

National Lampoon's Animal House
(John Landis, USA 1978)

The Odd Couple
(Gene Saks, USA 1967)

The Omen
(Richard Donner, USA 1976)

Once Upon a Time in the West
(Sergio Leone, Italy 1968)

One Eyed Jacks
(Marlon Brando, USA 1961)

On the Town
(Stanley Donen/Gene Kelly, USA 1949)

Pale Rider
(Clint Eastwood, USA 1985)

The Parallax View
(Alan J. Pakula, USA 1974)

The Pelican Brief
(Alan J. Pakula, USA 1993)

Philadelphia
(Jonathan Demme, USA 1993)

The Piano
(Jane Campion, Australia/Fr 1993)
A crate on a beach in the South Seas and a mute but implacably-determined heroine in Victorian dress - Jane Campion's breakthrough film is immediately vivid in defining its emotional territory. Mud, Maoris and a tattooed Harvey Keitel provide the magnetism for Holly Hunter's struggle against her arranged marriage. Overwhelming proof of Campion's burgeoning talent.

The Prisoner of Zenda
(Richard Thorpe, USA 1952)

The Railway Children
(Lionel Jeffries, UK 1970)

Rain Man
(Barry Levinson, USA 1988)

The Remains of the Day
(James Ivory, UK 1993)

The Roaring Twenties
(Raoul Walsh, USA 1939)
Proof that the gangster epic existed long before *The Godfather*, this portrays the era of speakeasies and desperate living through the eyes of three returning First World War veterans. An electrifying James Cagney plays the good guy drawn into bootlegging by a vicious Humphrey Bogart.

Rocky
(John G. Avildsen, USA 1976)

Rosemary's Baby
(Roman Polanski, USA 1968)

Saturday Night Fever
(John Badham, USA 1977)

Serpico
(Sidney Lumet, USA 1973)

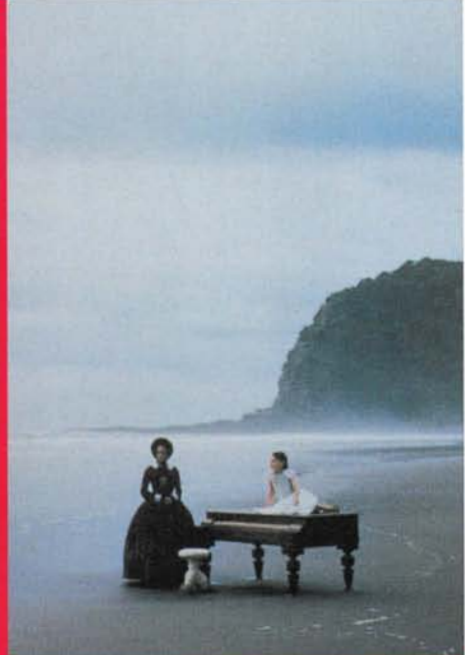
Seven Brides for Seven Brothers
(Stanley Donen, USA 1954)

The Seven Year Itch
(Billy Wilder, USA 1955)

Shadowlands
(Richard Attenborough, UK 1993)

The Shining (Stanley Kubrick, UK 1980)
Stanley Kubrick's masterful study of a writer's derangement during the closed winter months in an isolated hotel, is a film-buff's cornucopia of style and substance. The director's superior technique is always secondary to the compassion, sympathy and wit that he shows towards his characters.

Single White Female
(Barbet Schroeder, USA 1992)



Sleepless in Seattle
(Nora Ephron, USA 1993)

Some Like it Hot
(Billy Wilder, USA 1959)

Stalag 17
(Billy Wilder, USA 1953)

Star Wars
(George Lucas, USA 1977)

Sudden Impact
(Clint Eastwood, USA 1983)

Sunset Boulevard
(Billy Wilder, USA 1950)

The best of five Billy Wilder films in this season, *Sunset Boulevard* mixes narrative invention (the tale is told by a dead man), grand theatrics (Gloria Swanson playing an ageing silent movie star), and an insider's take on the less salubrious side of the film business. A work of supreme technical genius and wit, entirely characteristic of Wilder at his best.

Suspicion
(Alfred Hitchcock, USA 1941)

Tarzan and His Mate
(Cedric Gibbons, USA 1934)

Tina: What's Love Got to Do With It
(Brian Gibson, USA 1993)

To Kill a Mockingbird
(Robert Mulligan, USA 1962)

Tombstone
(George Pan Cosmatos, USA 1993)

Tootsie
(Sidney Pollack, USA 1982)

True Romance
(Tony Scott, USA 1993)

Wayne's World 2
(Stephen Surjik, USA 1993)

White Christmas
(Michael Curtiz USA 1954)

Witness
(Peter Weir, USA 1985)





THE KUBBRICK

With its doomed characters and cruel world, Kubrick's 'The Killing' is a model of film noir

Mid-July, and Paris is in the grip of a heat-wave. I am here to talk to French cinematographer Pierre-William Glenn about *23h58*, his elegiac heist movie, which is set during the Le Mans 24-hour motorcycle race. Its inspiration: Stanley Kubrick's 1956 *The Killing*, his first fully satisfying genre excursion, a gangster picture about a team of crooks stealing a sweepstake's purse. Impeccably iconic, *The Killing* fitted comfortably into the *film noir* canon; Lucien Ballard's cinematography combined documentary-styled exteriors and crisp *chiaroscuro* interiors; Jim Thompson's additional dialogue was suitably clenched-teeth laconic, as delivered by a cast including genre mainstays Sterling Hayden as heist-maestro Johnny Clay and Elisha Cook Jr as racetrack cashier and pitiful cuckold George Peatty, as recognisably weaselly a patsy as he had been in Hawks' *The Big Sleep* (1946). *23h58*, however, is more than merely a straightforward remake; as crucial as the earlier film is to Glenn's delineation of his characters, it's equally crucial to *their* understanding of one another in the film.

Glenn's filmography of 50-plus titles as a Director of Photography reads like a rollick of postwar French auteur cinema, with credits on films by Rivette, Pialat, Costa-Gavras, Alain Corneau and Euzhan Palcy, cinematography credits on five Bertrand Tavernier and three Truffaut movies, and collaborations with illustrious *émigrés* Joseph Losey and Sam Fuller. Since 1974, Glenn has directed four films: completed in 1993, *23h58* is the most recent, drawing heavily on a passion for motorbike racing, as did his first feature, *Le Cheval*

de fer, a documentary (1975). *23h58* follows two former racers, Bernard (Jean-François Stevenin) and Thierry (Gerald Garnier), and their plan to steal the Le Mans takings, all FF6 million of it, during the race. This they do, only to find themselves trapped within the race track and the police onto them. The film's cinéophile detective, Superintendent Steve Morin (Jean-Pierre Malo), has discerned iconic moments from classic crime movies behind the events unfolding around him. "All this makes me think of a film," he says at one point: "Clown masks, banknotes on a race track..." He runs through the options, which include Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break* (1991), Henri Verneuil's *Mélie en sous-sol* (1962) and Sidney Lumet's *The Anderson Tapes* (1971), before settling on *L'Ultime razzia* (*The Killing's* French title). "I'm going to change the ending", he declares.

"The Americans made it and then the French invented it", wrote French critic Marc Vernet of *film noir*. Even in the 1930s, pre-*noir* shadows were already visible in French Poetic Realism's moody narratives of proletarian despair and doomed criminality. In regard to the gangster-movie, the passage of aesthetic models, critical ideas and personnel between America and France was perhaps established by *émigré* directors in 40s Hollywood; Fritz Lang, for example, tooled ur-*noir* classics from Renoir originals, remaking *La Chienne* (1931) as *Scarlet Street* (1946) and *La Bête humaine* (1938) as *Human Desire* (1954). The French star-driven gangster films of the 1950s – *Touchez pas au Grisbi* (1954) with Jean Gabin, *Le Môme vert-de-gris* (1953) with Eddy Constantine – demonstrated a reciprocal fas-

cination with generic American themes, this post-war enthusiasm reaching its emblematic high point when Godard had Belmondo do Bogart à la français in *A bout de souffle* (1960) – and the *nouvelle vague's* euphoric rewiring of the American B-movie tradition followed. The symbiosis continues unabated today, with Tarantino's fevered genuflections to Melville and Godard.

Glenn's film inserts itself precisely into this vertiginous relationship. Bernard (played by Stevenin like a lorry driver with an existential crisis as permanent as his five o'clock shadow) and Steve (given an aristocratically preoccupied *haut-é* by Malo) are fatalists hemmed in by obsessive repetition, older-style macho compulsives who, in an age of consumer-friendly irony, find themselves stripped of the honour and certainties that genre might have once bestowed upon them. In *23h58* male bonding comes across as cut-price and slightly foxed, enacted between *truand* and *flic* over the nostalgic embers of former glories (whether cinema or motorbike racing).

For Bernard and Steve the Kubrick film is a totem, an article of faith even, and their love of film is an index of both sentiment and civilisation. For Glenn, the film serves as a generic blueprint which he remodels at various levels. *The Killing's* innovative origami-like temporal structure and voice-over commentary is compressed into *23h58's* 24-hour timeframe and bracketed by its combination of voice-over and epistolary narrative. Documentary-style realism is evident in both films; Glenn seeding his fiction with a convincingly detailed treatment of the racetrack environment itself.

Numerous individual details from *The Killing* are themselves transposed, two in particular worth noting. Maurice, *The Killing's* chess-playing wrestler hired to start a cop-diverting punch-up at the race-track bar, is replaced by Georges and Charles, a duo of charmingly psychopathic martial-arts experts. In Kubrick, marksman Nikki Arane (Timothy Carey) is given an exchange with a crippled black parking attendant (James Edwards) who is so surprised by Nikki's courteousness he thinks he's happened upon a decent white man. However, Nikki is not out to make friends but to do the job fast, and soon resorts to a racist insult to get the lonely young man off his back. No more than a few minutes long, this sequence flicks cynically through several emotional registers – civility, empathy, hostility – with a glacially ironic climax as Nikki is shot dead, with Edwards' attendant impassively observing the redneck's death. This tangential but nonetheless loaded treatment of race is expanded on in *23h58*, notably through Jean-Marie, the Front



Ghosts of film past: '23h58', with its allusions to 'Point Break' and 'The Killing'

CONNECTION

which Pierre-William Glenn has used in his latest film '23h58'. He talks with Chris Darke

National-supporting cop, named after the French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. Initially sketched in broad, almost caricatural strokes, Jean-Marie becomes a denser, more obviously threatening character as the film progresses.

Yet even with such clear affinities, the most obvious and pleasing difference between the two films is in the tones they achieve. Kubrick's cold, mechanistic study is stop-watch obsessive and freeze-dried by dark irony. Glenn's is altogether more elegiac, almost melancholic in tone, its 'Frenchness' most manifest in the privileging of atmosphere over plot, psychology over narrative. The final 20 minutes illustrate this perfectly, as post-heist carnage gives way to a drifting reverie, with Bernard and Steve steadicam-shadowed on their long night's *dérive* into daybreak. Threading through the nocturnal racetrack, each pondering the other's motives, they examine the relationship which is, after all, the real subject of the film. The sequence has a marvellously rendered sense of dilated time, like tripping or dreaming; the film often moves into a meditative, atmospheric register beyond the ably-rendered plot-point demands of the genre, while avoiding a too-literal transposition of *The Killing*'s temporal contortions. It's clear from Glenn's approach that one way new life is breathed into old genres is through a strong investment of the personal: *23h58* profits from its director's own cinéophile and motorbiking passions, exploring and dramatising them.

Taking advantage of his last free afternoon before shooting begins on a Roger Vadim television movie ("The first job I've ever done for the money"), Glenn was in ebullient mood and our conversation ranged from the specific to general meditations on the work of the cinematographer-turned-director.

Darke: Tell me about how *The Killing* was used in preparing *23h58*.

Glenn: Jean-Claude Vicquery (my Director of Photography) and I watched it together. In the first script, the plot was entirely derived from *The Killing*. Bernard and Thierry, the two ex-racers, sit in a hotel room watching a tape of the film as if in rehearsal, with all the accessories of the crime – guns, masks – present. The scenes where the stuntmen were recruited for the heist were identical to those in Kubrick's film. At this stage the little girl's voice-over, which became essential for me in the final editing, wasn't present. I found the complete reliance on *The Killing* to be a poor solution, but only when I'd finished the film – which is pretty serious, especially for the production! Having finished the film, shot and edited it, I saw the mixed version and didn't find it very good.

I shot the film in 1991, finished it in 1992, reshot in the same year and finished in 1993. So, on one hand, it's the shortest film in the history of the cinema – the shooting took 36 hours – and also the longest, as I finished at the end of 1993! The first shooting was at Le Mans in April 1991, the first edit was finished at the beginning of 1992. I took the film to Cannes in 1992 and I wasn't at all happy with it.

Darke: *23h58* opens with a shot of the children on the beach playing with model motorbikes and racers. There follows a close-up of the toys, then a high-angle shot of the entire beach, almost as though the children themselves were the toys.

This shot announces the film's narrative perspective, as if from the point of view of gods playing with humans and their destinies.

Glenn: It's the principle of tragedy itself. You know, I spent a long time looking for a beach that resembled the one in Fritz Lang's *Moonfleet*, my favourite film and the one I've watched most of all. The principle of *Moonfleet*'s story, which is also that of *23h58*, is of the promise made to a child. In *23h58*, the adults themselves are seen as children. This, of course, is the principle of tragedy, of the eternal return. That is to say, how does one break the circle of tragic repetition, how can one escape the script already written for a life? The hope of ►



'Winding Down': Elisha Cook Jr., looking for the end, in Stanley Kubrick's 'The Killing'

◀ the film is that the children will do something other than what the adults have done. This is why the shot that Stevenin enters at the end of the film is the same as at the beginning, and why the principal motif is the circle, the racetrack circuit being part of this, around which the racers speed only to return to the same spot. The principle is one of repetition and desire, and the hope is that the children will break out of that. It's an adult who recounts the story to a child, hoping that the child will not replay it. At the same time, I am not personally very optimistic.

Darke: Did the first version share the same structure, the same opening?

Glenn: No, in the first version Bernard returned to a woman, but it was a bad idea, completely symbolic and lacking any hope at all. I changed the structure entirely. Bernard rejoins the little girl, but in a film, not a reality; the scene is shot in black and white to indicate that it's a *desire* that we see. In fact, adding the crucial element of the child's voice-over bought a certain fairytale aspect to this story of two adults who come together through a shared admiration for *The Killing*. It's a story that picks up on the dream common to all love stories, that of meeting the ideal partner. In this case it's the person who has loved the same film as you, who intends to share it and live it out for real with you and who grants you the same freedom to play and dream as they expect for themselves. This is what persuades Steve the cop to let Bernard go, but also to return the cassette of the film to him which is, after all, their common reference point, the symbol of their understanding. It's also why the images from *The Killing* pass from Steve to Bernard both as 'objective' images but also as images seen and felt by two characters who are living out the same dream. When things are going well during a shoot you often hear it said on set that "everyone's making the same film," actors and technicians alike. Bernard and Steve work in a similar kind of harmony, living out the same story derived from the imaginary world of *The Killing*. Bernard makes it a reality which Steve knows how to decipher.

In the first edit of the film I had used extracts from *The Killing* but it proved impossible to get the rights for them, so this led me to use photographs from the film. With hindsight, I found Bernard and Steve's both seeing still images to be a much better solution.

Darke: So Steve sees something of himself in Bernard?

Glenn: He sees himself completely in Bernard. It's like the rapport between spectators and people onscreen; spectators see themselves in those who realise the desires they can't. For Steve, Bernard represents an ideal image of himself. The idea of freedom at work in the film is one that allows Steve to let Bernard go in memory of the liberty they both once shared on the racetrack.

Darke: Is this why there has to be a cop as repellent and repressive as the Front National supporter? I mention this because the relationship between Steve and Jean-Marie seems to me to recall the exchange in *The Killing* between the black American carpark attendant and the sharpshooter Nikki Arane. In *23h58* there is – although with a very different emphasis and tone – a discourse on race that is as deliberately loaded as is that moment from *The Killing*.

Glenn: Very much so. Those who die immediately are the poor; the relationship with money in both films is such that it kills the poor. As soon as the money arrives everyone dies; this is one of the dramatic principles of *The Killing*. There is the scene in *23h58* where Momo, the young *beur*, dies, having touched the money, which directly descends from that great scene with the sniper in *The Killing*. It's exactly the same idea: as soon as the money arrives they start to kill.

Darke: In both *The Killing* and *23h58* death is treated in a way that recalls Bresson for me, strangely enough. Death isn't bullets leaving the barrel of a gun but rather something that's already arrived, an abstract potential in the shape of money, which then sweeps through a room like a gale, leaving only bodies in its wake.

Glenn: Exactly. In *The Killing*, when share-out turns into double-cross and stick-up, we barely see the shooting, just the bodies afterwards.

Darke: Jean-Marie is treated like a bit of a cartoon character, although being very recognisably the 80s French fascist. But at the moment he shoots

In both films, money kills the poor. As soon as it arrives, everyone dies; this is one of the dramatic principles of 'The Killing'

Thierry dead we recognise him less as a broadly drawn stereotype than as someone who is truly dangerous, a psychopath.

Glenn: He is dangerous and human, he is very human because he is dangerous. He's not a symbol but, then again, psychopaths are the most difficult characters to play. Nikki, the sniper hired to shoot the horse in *The Killing*, is a great character, an utter psychopath, but rendered very successfully by Timothy Carey. In one of the drafts of *23h58* I wrote in a character very much modelled on Nikki, but the character of Jean-Marie is both pathetic and troubling, because he is authentically of his time. This character is the most dangerous sort there is – but, he's also absolutely convinced of the justice of his actions and doesn't think. And because he doesn't think, he – or that's my belief – entertains no thought in relation to cinema. Because I'm a *cinéaste*, the idea in the film is that to have no knowledge of the history of cinema is to have no idea of history and therefore to know nothing but an emotional principle, which is very dangerous. To be emotionally convinced that you are totally right is fascistic.

Darke: So cinema can be seen as a collective memory, a means by which the traumas of history can be confronted and remembered.

Glenn: In some respects, *23h58* is a film I've lived. I made my first film as director about a group of real motorcyclists, who all died on the racetrack. It was the story of people who wanted to live their lives as though in a novel. They were all injured, badly or otherwise, but the injuries weren't important, they carried on racing. It's a very romantic idea, that of confronting one's own death. But all these people are now dead, save one.

The survivor, who is now a stills photographer for films – he worked on Carax's films, Collard's *Les Nuits Fauves* and on *23h58* – is called Bernard Fau, and initially I wanted him to play the role of Bernard. I tried for some time to get it to work but it didn't happen; it was a technical problem of acting, he was so authentically himself that he couldn't interpret the role. I dedicated the film to Fau (and also to my late friend Serge Daney, who wrote best about the world of cinematic fiction).

I believe that in the work of film-making there is a quasi-religious relationship with the body as something almost sacred. As a Director of Photography, you sense the physicality of flesh and presence and, for me, the best directors are those who understand this rapport with the physical. The screen is two-dimensional, but a good film-maker makes it come alive in three dimensions and in time. Daney wrote something of fundamental importance, which is that the true film-makers create time, not images, but the time of a story through which we are in another time. This, I think, is something that is not commonly understood. When I'm shooting, what interests me is the density of time. I like those moments when time is concentrated in a physical or sexual rapport, a kind of tension, as in a martial-arts competition.

Darke: So such relationships are not just competitive, they're also about communion.

Glenn: Exactly. It's the same with boxing, which is not exclusively to do with confrontation but also with a coming together. It's idiotic to think that it's just a battle, because one has to be in the head of the other. It's a kind of ritualistic work. You see, I'm not at all in favour of destruction, I'm a materialist, but I need rituals to live by. The *corrida*, for example. I have a close friend who is now a bullfighter and I went to see the *corrida* last summer and it was the strongest experience of the year for me.

Darke: Would it interest you to film something like that?

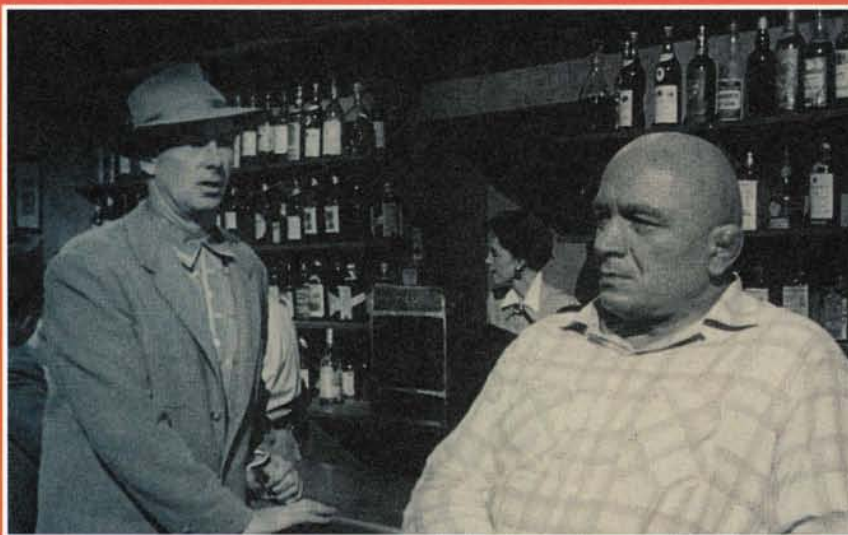
Glenn: The idea of the *corrida* and the rapport with that animal force, the need to kill the animal within and the ritual of this act, for me this is a very strong experience. But my ritual is the cinema and I think I'd be dead without it. It's a magical ritual, which may sound very reactionary, but one makes films in order to evade death, to halt time, it's a way of leaving a trace in time. It may seem a little overreaching but I've thought a lot about my motivation in making films and I can't understand people who pretend to want to make films without putting their lives into it. But, yes, I would like to film the *corrida*. Anyway, what I'm talking about in my film-making are things that confront me, that question and challenge me.

Darke: And your *corrida* is the cinema?

Glenn: Yes. But within that comparison, what brings the two things together is the very meta-physical rapport they have in common. The cinema challenges people's lives. The image that cinema gives people of themselves is more than mere simulation, it's a kind of reality.

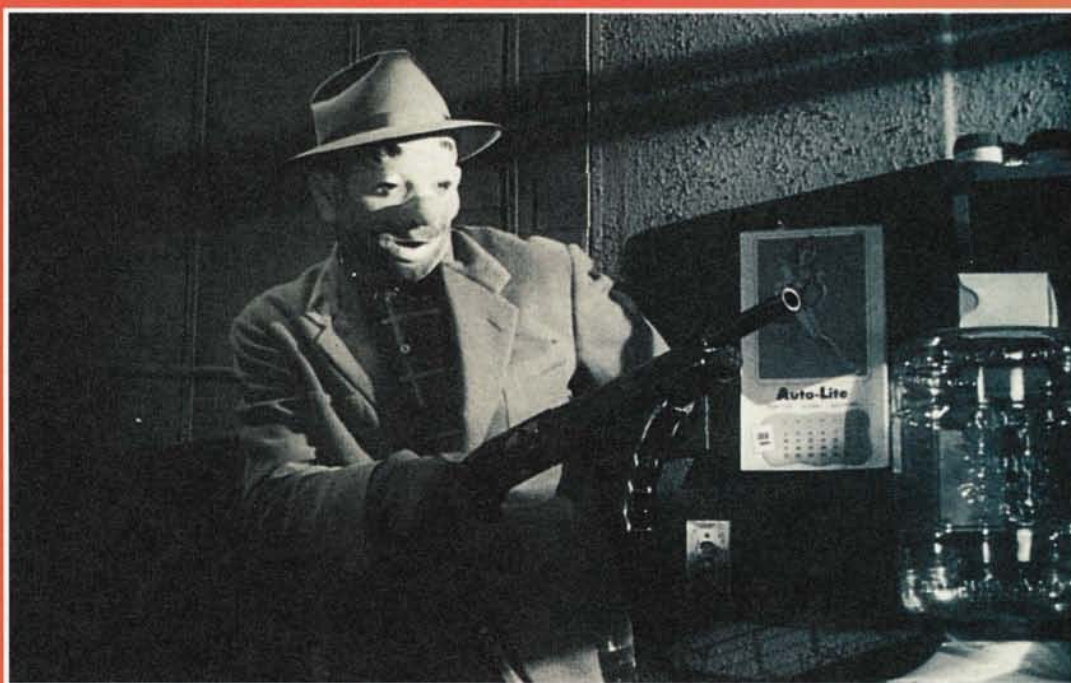
'23h58' opens on at the National Film Theatre on 20 October and is reviewed on page 55 of this issue. Thanks to the following for their help in researching this article: Pierre William Glenn, Viviane Mikhalkov, Elizabeth Bridault, Philippe Vene, Pierre and Jacqueline Persuy, Jay Derbyshire

PIERRE-WILLIAM GLENN ON THE KILLING



► The photograph of Johnny Clay (Sterling Hayden) in the clown's mask served as the inspiration for my film, which is a story about people who live their lives in disguise. And a clown, after all, is a strange being, both comic and tragic. In '23h58', the game of disguise is played out during the robbery by having Bernard and Thierry wear masks representing the caricatured faces of two French politicians, François Mitterrand and Georges Marchais, one a

Socialist, the other a Communist. To my mind, these men's real political identities have been totally usurped by their mask-like personas and the film makes this doubly comical by having the actors impersonate their voices. It's the best-known image from '23h58'. It made the cover of 'Cahiers du cinéma' when the film was released. I can't decide whether it's a funny or a disturbing image, which is why I like it.



▼ This photograph of George Peatty (Elisha Cook Jr.) bloodied, in profile just before he shoots Sherry is highly expressionistic both for its lighting contrasts and for its content. I used the zoom to animate this photograph and tried to recall Kubrick's use of in-frame movement during this sequence. I had originally included

the sequence from the film in '23h58' but was unable to obtain the rights, so I thought of how it would be possible to bring stills from the film to life – I think that overall it was a better solution than including extracts from 'The Killing'. The idea of trying to decipher a freeze frame seemed much more interesting to me.



▲ This still of Sherry Peatty (Marie Windsor) and her husband George Peatty (Elisha Cook Jr.) at breakfast makes me think of women in film noir, the poisonous and evil role of femmes fatales they have generally been given and their attraction towards

the strange, incoherent and chaotic that is implied by their narrative function. In any case, these are the characteristics of Didi (Sophie Tellier) in '23h58', an essentially emotional character who betrays Thierry out of love as well as for the money... and who

doesn't realise what she's doing. Women, especially feminists, usually dislike the image of women that '23h58' presents – but it's one very typical of film noir. I like the fact that in this photograph Marie Windsor is visually dominant over Elisha Cook.

◄ Johnny Clay (Sterling Hayden) and Maurice Oboukhoff (Kola Kwariani) at the racetrack bar before the staged brawl. In '23h58', this photograph of Johnny and Maurice becomes transposed into a parody of combat. I had my wrestlers played by two Karate professionals, Georges Zsiga, a sixth dan wrestler, and Emmanuel Pinda, twice a world heavyweight champion. In this photograph I particularly like the element of innocence

in Sterling Hayden's performance, the suggestion of "the calm before the storm", as well as Johnny's and Maurice's silent complicity before the brawl, which is heightened by the depth of field and the camera position which gives visual significance to Maurice, this minor character. The photograph reminds me of the shot in King Vidor's 'Duel in the Sun' with Charles Bickford standing in the foreground at the bar.



▲ This photograph of Johnny Clay (Sterling Hayden) with Nikki Arane (Timothy Carey) at the shooting range had a more important place in the first version of the '23h58' script. Bernard and Thierry visited a pilot, who was to make a parachute jump during the race. I'm particularly attracted by the weirdness of Carey's performance, its obsessive, unsettling aspect, and of this

whole sequence in 'The Killing'. For some reason it reminds me of Roger Corman's 'Machine Gun Kelly' (1958), when Charles Bronson walks through the menagerie – which I suppose relates to the animal presence, the cat that Carey holds throughout the sequence, and which emphasises the strangely feline, unpredictable quality that he brings to his character.

STYLE AND THE HOOD

Stella Bruzzi on gangsters, American and French style



SCARFACE
(Howard Hawks, 1932)
The film gangster became conventionalised in the early 30s. In 'Little Caesar' (Mervyn LeRoy, 1930), 'The Public Enemy' (William A. Wellman, 1931) and 'Scarface', he came to be closely modelled on the mobsters that dominated the prohibition years. His essential paradox was that he was excessively glamorous as well as excessively violent. The juxtaposition of suave evening dress and sub-machine guns is thus a recurrent image. Tony Camonte (aka Al Capone) has two main obsessions, clothes and guns – and Camonte fetishises both in 'Scarface'. Scrupulous detail is all: Hawks' attention to it is the evidence of his own fetishisation of the gangster's accoutrements. The 1934 Hays-Breen Office recommendations concerning the depiction of crime were responding to 'Scarface' in particular when they stipulated that films

“As far back as I can remember I always wanted to be a gangster.” Ray Liotta's voice-over opens *GoodFellas*, with a powerful eulogy to the mystique of organised crime, and how a man can become a somebody in a neighbourhood of nobodies. Organised crime gives Liotta's Henry Hill a real sense of belonging: it also ensnares him in an unrealisable fantasy.

The allure of the classic gangster films has always been this conflict between the idealised and the mundane. In *Scarface*, when Tony Camonte dies under a neon sign reading “The World Is Yours”, the scene is imbued more with a glamorous, idealising pathos than moralistic irony. The gangster *fantasy* ends as most of the films end, with the tragic villain dead in the street: Cagney in *The Roaring Twenties*, Belmondo in *A bout de souffle*. The seedy *reality* tends to end as *GoodFellas* ends, with Liotta living the dull, suburban life he had so desperately tried to avoid, reminiscing about the good times.

The myth of the gangster was largely built up and embellished in American and French films, twin cinematic traditions liberally and imaginatively scavenging from one another. Traditionally, the French films have tended to fix on a sometimes tortuous realism to rub

chicness: fashionable, expensive clothes becoming synonymous with the criminality of organised crime. The wool suits that James Cagney and Humphrey Bogart wear in 'The Roaring Twenties', below, are indistinguishable from those in the fashion pages of 'Esquire' in the 20s, or the admired and much imitated suits made for the then Prince of Wales. The American fashion of the time was for double-breasted suits with two sets of buttons, wide lapels, welt pockets and full-cut, pleated trousers, worn with either a Homburg or a Fedora hat, a silk handkerchief in the breast pocket and a striped tie. Considered particularly stylish was the chalk stripe suit: thus the only difference between Bogart and the 20s gentleman is the gun.

PÉPÉ LE MOKO
(Julien Duvivier, 1936)
Jean Gabin as Pépé epitomises an alternative to

the American model: he's the doomed loner, more seductive rake than aspiring gentleman. He's also an object of desire, setting him apart from the American gangster, who tends to be sexually inept or dysfunctional (think of the incestuously possessive Tony Camonte). The important differences are signalled by Pépé's dandyish



rather than high-class clothes, and by two recurrent details in particular: his penchant for contrasting dark shirts and light ties and for putting a silk neckerchief under a traditional 30s jacket. Both underline his non-conformity, because elsewhere the black shirt and the scarf are classic signifiers of untrustworthiness in men.

SOME LIKE IT HOT
(Billy Wilder, 1959)
The American gangster tradition reinvented itself in the 60s, with such films as 'Bonnie and Clyde': until then, the post-war fashion had

against the allure of crime (such as *Rififi*). The American films have been preoccupied with the cinematic representation of real crimes, in particular the gangland wars of the Prohibition-dominated 20s. The Hollywood films of the 30s (such as *Little Caesar*) took the actual stories of Capone and foes as the basis for narratives.

But the specificity of this genre resides neither in realism nor actuality, but the establishment of a distinctive iconographic shorthand. Certain significant images and objects recur: the Fedora and the formal suit, the dark city, the car, the night club, the opulent family home, the hotel room, the tommy gun, the .38. And the characters in this underground world are similarly set apart from others by their use of cryptic, jargonised language and adherence to a code of conduct based on unflinching loyalty. Theirs is a closed world.

The American gangster films appear more pedestrian and innocent than the French – for one thing, the Americans made up the rules. Nowhere is this more obvious than in regard to clothes. The French films do not talk about clothes (true, there's criticism of Belmondo's Michel in *A bout de souffle*, for wearing silk socks with a tweed jacket, but this can be presumed

been to parody gangsterism. In 'Some Like It Hot' the dominant theme is masquerade; in an endlessly layered film everything is a front and nobody is what they seem, the most obvious example being the cross-dressing of Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis. But masquerade – the idea of appearance as camouflage – is also used to satirise the smooth gangster image. Named after items of clothing and famous Italian cheeses, Spats and his fellow mobsters are caricatures of their real and fictional predecessors. They wear costumes (which disguise character) as opposed to clothes (which complement character). Wilder lathers the traditional gangster's vanity with irony, making the fetishisation of smart clothing a source of comedy.



A BOUT DE SOUFFLE
(Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)
Godard's first film stands as the ultimate homage to the American crime film; it also heralds a new, more self-conscious age for the gangster movie. The American films featured ('The Harder They Fall' and 'Ten Seconds to Hell') are only important for Godard as a shorthand Americana. He is not recreating a bygone gangster era – in the mode of subsequent American films like 'The St. Valentine's Day Massacre' and 'The Untouchables' – but reconstructing the genre itself as an ironic adventure. Thus Belmondo plays at being Bogart, incessantly imitating his gesture of running his thumb across his lips, walking down Les Champs-Élysées wearing a 1960



an allusion to the fastidiousness that pervades the American films). The Hollywood films do: Tony Camonte in *Scarface* invites comments ("How do you like it? Expensive, huh?"); Joey in *Little Caesar* straight away sees being a gangster in terms of what the money will enable him to look like ("Just think of the clothes I could wear!"); Henry Hill in *GoodFellas* proudly shows his first suit off to his Irish mother (she is horrified: "You look like a gangster!"). This emphasis on ditching the cap and work clothes of the petty criminal for the made-to-measure gangster three-piece has much to do with the accompanying rise in social status. In *The Public Enemy* Tom (Cagney) tells his English tailor not only to make sure he puts six buttons on his waistcoat but to leave some extra room around the waist: he expects to live and eat well.

Such signposting reflects a broader stylistic difference between the two traditions. The classic American films are characterised by frenetic action and fast talking, frequently containing the trademark montage sequence that encapsulates the gangster existence: burning rubber, peppering windows with machine guns. Noise is the most consistent element: screeching tyres, alarms, sirens, gun fire. By contrast the

classic French movies are quiet and exaggeratedly slow: *Pépé le Moko*, Jules Dassin's heist film *Rififi* and Melville's quintessential *Le Samourai* all create tension through the mere suggestion of potentially dangerous noise. This is best exemplified by the spasmodic squeaking of Jef's budgerigar in an otherwise empty flat in *Le Samourai*: a warning that intruders have planted a bugging device. The gangsters themselves are similarly enigmatic, taciturn and solitary.

Henry in *GoodFellas* talked of belonging to the Mafia; Italian-American films from *Scarface* to *The Godfather* are in many respects warped family melodramas; James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson go into partnership before they go into racketeering: the American gangster is part of a group (a gang), and among friends. The robbery in *23h58* is also carried out by a gang, but there is very little substance to group relationships in French gangster movies. The male bonding of *Reservoir Dogs* (that most European of American gangster films) becomes isolation in *23h58*. The French gangster is the antidote to false camaraderie, a loner on the run from the authorities and in hiding. A similar narrative pattern – from *Pépé le Moko*, *A bout de souffle* and *Le Samourai* to *Léon* – recurs: the police (or other

gangs) are closing in from very early on, capture just a matter of time. Perhaps the difference is between romanticised passivity and aggrandised activity; certainly there is more a sense of a life beyond the claustrophobic underworld in the American films, as if the chance not to get pulled into organised crime was there for Tom in *The Public Enemy* or Michael in *The Godfather*, and they just didn't take it.

So despite all generic similarities, the French and American films have always diverged on the level of tone. The combination of familiarity and difference has probably been the reason for all the mutual scavenging, whether in Godard's adulation of the Hollywood popular, or Tarantino's of the European art-house. However, since Godard, the borrowing has largely been American, whether in straightforward remakes of French originals (*Breathless*, *The Assassin*) or in films which allude to prototypes (*The Driver* has essentially the same plot as *Le Samourai*; *Killing Zoe* is in the tradition of *Rififi*). Today it is much rarer for the references to be made the other way (*23h58*, which openly stresses parallels with *The Killing*, being an exception). The gangster film may come more naturally to Americans but the French do it with more style.

interpretation of the traditional gangster ensemble. The reference points are, therefore, both generic and contemporary: Belmondo's hat, though Trilby-ish, perches at a notably non-gangster angle.

LE SAMOURAI

(Jean-Pierre Melville, 1967)
In 'Le Samourai' Jef Costello,

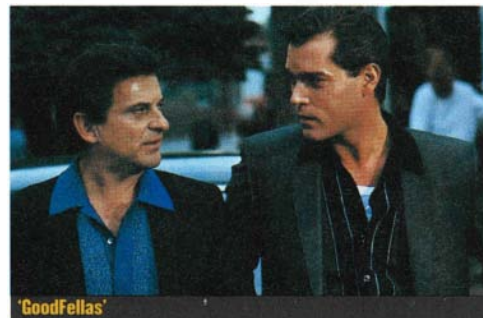


Alain Delon's character (with his aptly Italian-American name) is a walking gangster clich  . Jef, who maintains a silent impassivity even to his death, doesn't have a character as such; he is an icon, a gangster mannequin in his hat, trench coat and

monochrome suit and tie. Delon acts as if oblivious to the irony Melville heaps upon him: the classic hitman cannot escape his clothes, to the extent that during the chase sequences through the M  tro Delon does not think to discard his hat and go incognito. He is fixed as the personification of the gangster. The casting of Delon in this role is also significant, not only because he is overtly attractive (unlike Cagney, Robinson, Bogart and Gabin, who are all small and gritty) but also because of his real life links with the French underworld: in 1968 the corpse of his bodyguard was found in a rubbish dump.

GOODFELLAS

(Martin Scorsese, 1990)
Though the Irish were the first immigrants to establish organised crime rings in America, the most infamous and violent were the Italians – more specifically the Sicilians, who brought La Cosa Nostra with them. In film, the tradition began



with 'Little Caesar', but it was 'Scarface' that cemented the image of Italians as heavily accented, excessively brutal, showily dressed, family- and spaghetti-loving Mafiosi, a representation that then runs through such diverse films as 'Al Capone', 'The Godfather', 'Married To The Mob' and Scorsese's 'Mean Streets' and 'Raging Bull'. But whereas Coppola grossly romanticises family loyalty and Omert  , Scorsese and Demme depict them as tacky and empty. The gangsters in 'GoodFellas' could never be mistaken for gentlemen; they aspire to look like gangsters. Their shirts are Gabicci rather than Brooks Brothers, their jackets have a sheen and (though Henry Hill is in fact from an Irish family) Ray Liotta is seldom without the trademark garment of the streetwise Italian-American – the white vest.

RESERVOIR DOGS

(Quentin Tarantino, 1992)
Alluding to Melville's use of the snap brim and trench coat in 'Le Deuxi  me Souffle',

'Le Samourai' and other films, Tarantino has expressed admiration for his creation of "suits of armour". 'Reservoir Dogs' particularly creates armour out of suits, more specifically the European suit. The tight, black single-breasted style was introduced in Italy in the mid-50s, and Italians were the first to dispense with trouser pleats and cuffs and to cut their jackets short (so it didn't touch the seat of the Vespa, or so the story goes). This sharper silhouette was soon taken up by the French (see Jef in 'Le Samourai') and is still used by Agn  s B. The defeat of the gangsters in 'Reservoir Dogs' is symbolised by the disintegration of their look: the loosening of ties, the removal of glasses, the drenching of shirts in blood.

L  ON

(Luc Besson, 1995)
Breaking with the dominant cinematic tradition, 'L  on' has moved away from hitman chic: its costume design conforms more to recent

shooting spree-movies ('Kalifornia', 'True Romance', 'Natural Born Killers'). Despite more differences than similarities, L  on's weary anti-chic harks back to Tony in 'Rififi'. L  on is not simply a gangster man  qu   but rather another ironic criminal, simultaneously acknowledging and discarding the tradition he belongs to. He has a hat, but it's more jazz-funk than Fedora; he has braces (like Vito Corleone, for example) but they are over a collarless granddad shirt; he has pleated trousers, but they are threadbare and too short; he is accompanied by a moll, but she is under-age. L  on has the accoutrements of both gangster and clown.

23h58

(Pierre-William Glenn, 1993)
Most film gangsters wear their profession on their sleeve, at odds with the supposed need for anonymity. The armed robber is the classic exception: here the uniform – masks, stockings, and so on – is both



imposed and temporary. Emulating the Presidents in 'Point Break', the gang in '23h58' hide their faces behind masks of Mitterrand and others. In keeping with 'Killing Zoe' (an American francophile's heist film) Glenn offers a grungy depiction of crime: limp leather and lank hair, not readily associated with the classic French gangster film. But shambolic scruffiness does have roots in a parallel tradition of cop movies ('Le Cop', 'L.627'), the other end of the design spectrum to 'The Roaring Twenties'; those involved with crime no longer dress up (like gentlemen), they dress down (like cops).

THE COLOUR OF ENTERTAINMENT

● In the middle of *That's Entertainment! III*, the MGM compilation recently released on video, of highlights from its musicals, Lena Horne remarks that it was not always so very jolly working on these paeans to happiness. She says it mildly, ironically, in a tone of probable conciliation, but it comes over like a flash of lightning on a sunny summer's day.

It's not that she's complaining about the work, though she and the film's other hosts, might well do. The *That's Entertainment!* series has never dwelt on it, but making these movies was always more grind than merriment. If common sense did not tell us that you don't get all those elements – music, dance, costume, decor, camerawork – into such perfect condition and so perfectly co-ordinated without labouring at it, plenty of histories and memoirs have reminded us. The time, the heat, the discomfort, to say nothing of Louis B. Mayer's manipulative cruelty and Arthur Freed's womanising and fag-baiting, are well documented. Making *The Wizard of Oz*, that jolly tale of the road to happiness, sounds like misery from end to end.

Nor is Horne saying anything she hasn't said before. In her biographies, in interviews and most memorably in her stage show *Lena Horne: the Lady and Her Music*, she has recounted the racism she encountered at MGM (and throughout her career): the attempts to persuade her to pretend she wasn't black, the racially coded criticisms of her style (for instance, that she made her mouth too big when she sang), the chronic inability to use her except in self-contained numbers dropped into the films and easily cut out for Southern exhibition, the scandalised reaction when she married a white man. The very fact that someone as magnetic and beautiful as Horne stopped working for MGM in 1950, long before the musical's fortunes started to decline, has always been eloquent testimony to the treatment she received there. And, inadvertently, MGM let us glimpse all this in the first *That's Entertainment!* film, in a sequence showing the stars gathered together at an anniversary dinner. The camera tracks along and reveals the stars being themselves: Judy Garland bubbling, Clark Gable grinning, Greer Garson in period costume, Katharine Hepburn talking, talking – and Horne, silent, staring into middle distance,

**Recently released on video,
'That's Entertainment! III'
prompts Richard Dyer to
reflect not only on delirious
singing and dancing –
but also on Lena Horne,
race and white space**



Easily edited out?: Lena Horne in 'Panama Hattie'

looking frankly pissed off. Even then, for those who cared to read it, her body language conveyed what her words make explicit in *That's Entertainment! III*.

So it's not revelation but context that makes Horne's contribution to *TE3* so startling. All the other hosts in this series (*TE*, *TE2*, *That's Dancing!*) have assured us that at MGM life was nothing but fun, respect and fulfilling hard work. Which we don't believe, but the claim is part of the entertainment. As Jane Feuer discusses in her book *The Hollywood Musical*, the show-within-a-show format of so many musicals both reveals the labour and skill involved in putting on an entertainment and yet passes it all off as improvisation, spontaneity, community and having a good time. So it is with the *That's Entertainment!* movies, and it comes as a shock to have someone even suggest anything to the contrary.

What makes Horne's statement more startling still is what comes before and after it. Before, we have a number called 'Pass that Peace Pipe' from *Good News*, brilliantly performed by the forgotten Joan McCracken and a host of people pretending to be college boys and girls. After it, we have Judy Garland, her voice strained, in 'I'm an Indian Too', one of the numbers she shot for *Annie Get Your Gun* before she left it. Both acts are based on the premise that it's fine for whites to do cod versions of Native American dance movements, and that there is something intrinsically hilarious about Native American names – so 'Pass that Peace Pipe' has such merry tongue-twisters as "just like the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Chattanooga Chippewas do". So here's Lena Horne raising the film's racial consciousness, and here's the film carrying on as if she hasn't said a thing.

Horne's contribution puts on to the agenda the whole question of race and musicals of the MGM variety (which were not exclusively made by MGM – *Cover Girl*, *Funny Face* and *Hello, Dolly!* are all 'MGM musicals', even though they were made by Columbia, Paramount and Fox respectively). Horne prompts us to look past the opulence and dynamism to consider the racial character of the entertainment in musicals.

This is not just a question of the way the non-white peoples of the US are represented, though heaven knows there are enough sins of omission

and commission here, the former perhaps the more staggering. Let us consider only African Americans, the fount of US popular music, itself one of the greatest glories of twentieth-century culture. Let us also grant that there is too much pain, bitterness and defiance in people like Billie Holiday or Paul Robeson for them to be easily accommodated to the musical's gospel of gaiety. But think what feelgood black talent was available that was either not used or squandered: Nat King Cole, Billy Eckstein, Ella Fitzgerald, Eartha Kitt, Sarah Vaughan for starters, as well as such dancers as Honi Coles or Katherine Dunham (names less familiar precisely because they were hardly recorded on film). Even when such stars as Louis Armstrong, Pearl Bailey, Cab Calloway, the Nicholas Brothers, Bill Robinson, Hazel Scott, Ethel Waters and Lena Horne were used, it was nearly always in one kind of ghetto or another: the all-black musical (an outtake from one of the best of which, *Cabin in the Sky*, is included in TE3), the number that can be dropped without doing violence to story or editing (such as Horne's intense 'Where or When' in *Words and Music*, also included in TE3), or, in the case of the sublime Bill Robinson, kiddies' corner, squiring Shirley Temple. All of these do at least preserve performances on film and, as Donald Bogle argues in his *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, what these performers achieve in these moments far outstrips the limitations of space and roles allotted them. Something can generally be salvaged from even the most unpromising examples: not only are Robinson's performances with Temple superb examples of his swinging, up-on-the-toes style, but they also provide one of the few images of rapport between an adult male and a female child that is neither smarmy nor sinister. Yet the footage of him elsewhere makes us realise how severely Hollywood restricted his range and thus what magic it passed up.

Except in the few all-black musicals, black performers in MGM-style musicals nearly always play characters who are nothing but entertainers. They may be – and often are – slaves, servants, waiters, prostitutes, but all they ever do in these roles is entertain. This is how it has been in the movies for a long time:

when the white Southerners in *The Birth of a Nation* take their white Northern friends round the plantation, what they show them are blacks dancing, not cotton-picking. Or else they play professional entertainers, typically club acts seen by the white characters on a night out. Musicals are often about characters who are entertainers, but when the entertainers are white, they usually also have lives – love lives especially, but also careers, vexatious relatives, personal problems of one kind or another. No such wider life is given black characters (if one can call them characters), depriving them of the emotional resonances that story and characterisation bring to white musical numbers.

Blackness is contained in the musical, ghettoised, stereotyped: 'only entertainment'. Yet containment is the antithesis of the entertainment a musical offers. Bursting from the confines of life by singing your heart out and dancing when you feel like it – this is the joy of the musical. Where the musical most disturbingly constructs a vision of race is in the fact that it is white people's privilege to be able to do this – and what that tells us about the white dream of being in the world.

This is to do with a relation both to physical space and to the cultural spaces of other peoples. This is a given of the fundamental performance elements of the musical: dance and song. Dancing is by definition about bodies in space, about how bodies relate to other bodies, how they move through space, how they make use of or submit to the environment around them. Less obviously, singing too is about space: singing carries differently into space than speech and different kinds of singing, from crooning to belting, impose themselves differently on the world around the singer. Fred Astaire's light voice and deft delivery create an intimacy that envelopes just him and his partner – no one notices when he croons 'Cheek to Cheek' to Ginger Rogers on a crowded dance floor in *Top Hat* before gliding her away to a secluded area. By contrast, at the end of 'S Wonderful' in *An American in Paris*, Gene Kelly and Georges Guetary ►

The incomparable Lena Horne





Going Native: Judy Garland squaws up in 'Annie Get Your Gun', to sing 'I'm an Indian Too'

◀ move further and further away from each other down a Parisian street, yelling alternately to each other the exultation of being in love. They dominate the street and passers-by look fondly on at, no doubt, *les folies de l'amour*.

Musicals typically show us space entirely occupied by white people, dancing wherever they want, singing as loudly or intimately as they need. This is often, as with black performers, contained within the confines of the space of entertainment: the theatre or cabaret stage. Even so, this was a very elastic space, especially in the hands of a Busby Berkeley in the Warner Bros musicals of the 30s. However, it was one of the distinctions of the MGM tradition to break away from exclusive show-within-a-show presentation, to give us singing in the rain and dancing in the street. This is where it began to be difficult to make better use of black performers.

One of the loveliest numbers in all the MGM musicals is 'Main Street' in *On the Town*. It is gloriously simple: the setting is a bare rehearsal studio, the performers wear their characters' everyday clothes, the melody is relaxed, the words plain and the dance steps seem little more than choreographed skipping and child's play. In short, 'Main Street' says 'anyone can do this and be so happy'. In the song, Gene Kelly invites Vera-Ellen to imagine they are back in his small town, Meadowville, in middle America, walking down the main street together. As they dance, in their imagination they rejoice in the warmth and freedom of American ordinariness. But down how many main streets in how many small US towns can we imagine a black couple strolling with such unwary joy? This is, not to

demand that the musical be realistic, but rather to suggest how even the utopian imagination has its boundaries of plausibility. 'Main Street' works because it feels psychically right to imagine whites – but only whites – so at ease in the heartland of the United States.

This feeling is intensified in numbers which start with a transition from a more confined to a more open space, although it's not always easy to get the impact of this from the *That's Entertainment!* films, which generally only give us the numbers (usually incomplete), not the situations from which they arise. The feeling of fresh air and open spaces, the emphasis on uplift in the dancing in many numbers have their meaning in the way they embody the characters' excitement at transcending constraints on their lives. It is the equivalents of these that makes so many great numbers soar: Gene Kelly, Rita Hayworth and Phil Silvers striding out of their favourite bar into the street in *Cover Girl* to 'Make Way for Tomorrow!'; the coda to 'My Favourite Things' in *The Sound of Music*, cutting from Julie Andrews sitting in her bedroom wondering what to do with these miserable kids to a montage of her leading them on a freewheeling gambol round Salzburg, winding up on a mountaintop ready for the next number, 'Do-Re-Mi'; the bullied underlings who decide to 'Put on [their] Sunday Clothes', strut out of the house, down the street and off to New York in *Hello, Dolly!*. Black people doing the same thing would in the white imagination seem like a terrifying attempt to take over.

Yet what whites do to their environment in these numbers is precisely to take it over. In the

examples given, the space they take over is already one they are socially entitled to, but the underlying feeling is of the right to expand out into space, whoever it belongs to. Something of this is evident in another scintillating number from *On the Town*, 'Prehistoric Man', which starts off from Ann Miller telling Jules Munshin in the New York Museum of Natural History that she fancies him far more than the average modern male because he looks like a caveman. Once the dancing gets underway, Miller leads the group (Munshin, Betty Garrett, Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra) in an unabashed, high-energy exploration of the museum. They use what is to hand to express their libidinal enthusiasm, and the natural history to hand turns out to be the pickings of 'primitive' culture. So there are tomtoms, Arabic instruments, bearskins, wigwams and so on, all grist to white joy. The number – and precisely in its intoxicating exuberance – is the very model of the colonial structure of feeling: expansion into space, control over what's in that space, incorporation of what's there into white agendas. This movement of expansion and incorporation is at the heart of the musical's construction of race.

'Prehistoric Man' romps through the spoils of a space that has already been expanded into: the museum is a repository of white exploration and colonialism. The musical has often been prepared to go further, actually to enter that space (as long as it could recreate it in the studio, of course). The early MGM musicals based on operettas, which tend to get left out of the *That's Entertainment!* films' account of the studio's glories, were sometimes explicitly about colo-

nialism: *Naughty Marietta*, *The Desert Song*, *Rose Marie*, *The Firefly*. In other musicals, the non-white world is oddly free of non-white people: there are no blacks on the Caribbean island of *The Pirate*, for instance, no Native Americans in *Oklahoma!* Even a race-sensitive musical like *South Pacific* celebrates the lustiness of white GIs (and, to be fair, one or two black ones) in 'There Is Nothing like a Dame', performed all over a Polynesian beach devoid of Polynesians save the old woman, Bloody Mary, who caters to their wants (drugs, booze, women).

One of the outtakes featured in *TE3* is 'March of the Hoagies' from *The Harvey Girls*, a Judy Garland musical set in the West. The number shows us the townsfolk striding out into the surrounding country in celebratory mood. With the relentless onward surge of its massed movements and firm editing, plus its torchlight *mise en scène*, it looks like nothing so much as a gathering of the Klans. This is taking possession of the land with a vengeance. No wonder it was dropped. It makes explicit what is masked in an earlier number, 'On the Atchison Topeka and the Santa Fe' (featured in a previous *That's Entertainment!*), which shows the film's heroines arriving on the train of the song's title at the township that is to be their new home. The number – justly prized by aficionados of the genre – has a complex interplay of both featured singers, and choreographed movement and camerawork; it has a great, catchy tune, given rousing but also ruminative and humorous variations; and it is a superb example of a number that expands outwards, as people step down from their long train journey and out into the new township, with the space for song and dance, for release and exhilaration, ever widening as the number proceeds, the interplay of elements evoking an instant (as well as literal) harmony, culminating in a splendid unison dance alongside the train as it pulls out. It has all the brio and spontaneity lacking in 'March of the Hoagies' – yet it too is about possession of the land: the song celebrates one of the main instruments by which this was achieved, the railway, while the number shows white folks in joyous occupancy of the world.

Whites in musicals have a rapturous relationship with their environment. This may be confined to the utopian moments of the numbers, but then they are the reason we go to see musicals. The potentially colonialist nature of this is suggested not only by the way whites stride down streets as if they own them (which in a sense they do) and burst all over other locales (which they don't), but also in the way the cultures of the colonised, as perceived by whites, are incorporated into the fabric of the numbers' music and dance. Not just the ethnographic objects picked out and played with in 'Prehistoric Man', but the gestures, shapes and sounds adopted from 'ethnic' dance: a bit of bottom-wiggling for Ann Miller when she gets hold of some Arab instruments, some bent-over high-stepping and Red Indian hollering for Betty Garrett when she puts on a Native American headdress, and stomps and 'ugh' sounds when they get hold of some African tom-toms.

The musical's propensity to do this sort of thing is sent up in the 'Stereophonic Sound'

number in *Silk Stockings* (one of the highlights of *TE3*, in which Fred Astaire and delicious Janis Paige mock the commercial imperatives of the day: more spectacle, hang the plot). At one point they sing of how it is not enough to have dancing any more, you have to have "Russian ballet, or Chinese ballet, or Bali ballet, or any ballet", and with each example they take up, with extraordinary precision and speed, a pose that sums up the national style in question. Numbers that have no overall non-US cultural reference do this all the time – slip into a bit of 'African' here, a bit of 'Irish' there, and so on. We are all familiar with the repertoire: syncopated stomping, with head and shoulders bent forward, is 'Red Indian'; sideways movements of the head, with hands touching above it, is 'Indian' (as in India); fast stamping heels and bent arms circling the body is 'Spanish'; anything that flaunts hips, groin and arse is 'black'. Singing, and especially orchestrations, can do the same thing. The exactness and rapidity with which it is done are generally breathtaking.

You might see this as eclectic, as a generous recognition of the music and dance riches of other cultures. It could even sound like a post-modern hybridity *avant la lettre*. There is undoubtedly a felt need to refresh and enliven white music and dance – indeed, white life and

We are familiar with the repertoire: stomping, head and shoulders bent forward is 'Red Indian'; anything that flaunts hips, groin and arse is 'black'

spirits – with the vitality, sensuality and sheer difference of other cultures. Yet all these cultures are subsumed into white needs, white goals, white displays. This is, after all, not dancing with the Other, but incorporating it, literally taking the Other into one's own body.

It is even implied that whites are better at black (and other) music and dance than blacks themselves. The greatest Southern black routine in musicals may well be shinningly pink Ann Miller's 'Shaking the Blues Away' in 1948's *Easter Parade* (featured in *TE3*), a *tour de force* of tapping and shimmying. While the black roots of taps may have been forgotten or never known to white audiences in 1948, shimmies were the 'black' movement *par excellence* in the white imagination. And, were this not enough, the song, though it never mentions skin colour, is all about what 'they' do 'down South' – as if this kind of cavorting is what Southern ladies and gentlemen get up to.

If Ann Miller does the greatest Southern black routine, then the greatest exponent of the black art of tap dance is Fred Astaire (and I'm Cyd Charisse). His case is interesting. In *Swing Time*, he blacks up to pay tribute to his sources, and specifically to Bill Robinson, in the 'Bojangles of Harlem' number. Generously meant, no doubt, but the use of blackface cannot help but

be disturbing (even if it is quite far from the grotesqueries of minstrelsy), and wouldn't it have been better if Astaire had used his influence to get Robinson himself on screen? Gerald Mast, in *Can't Help Singing*, commends the several numbers in which Astaire dances with black men (not women, presumably because this would raise the question of sexuality): 'Slap that Bass' in *Shall We Dance?*, a number with black and white prisoners in *You'll Never Get Rich* and, perhaps most famously, 'A Shine on Your Shoes' in *The Band Wagon* (featured in *That's Dancing!*). This last takes place in an amusement arcade on 42nd Street; the number starts off from the rhythm of the shoeshine 'boy', Leroy Daniels, doing his job and leads into a *pas de deux* for him and Astaire. It is hardly an equal routine, however. Occasionally both men occupy the screen equally and do the same or equivalent movements, but for most of the time Daniels is choreographically subservient to Astaire. Daniels' happy-go-lucky shoe-shining may give Astaire the inspiration to cheer up in this miserable amusement arcade (which symbolises for him the decline of Broadway entertainment), dancing with a black dancer may signal recognition of the sources (and masters?) of this tradition, but Daniels is really only there to provide a sunny, rhythmic point of departure for Astaire's brilliance and his character's feelings of release.

Most numbers do not even go so far as Astaire's in acknowledging black and other ethnic sources. The lively quote, as in 'Prehistoric Man' or 'Stereophonic Sound', is one thing. Ready mastery of exotic dances, especially Latin American ones, is acceptable too. But the degree to which black and Hispanic music and dance founded US popular music cannot be acknowledged – they are incorporated so far in MGM musicals as to disappear from view.

That's Entertainment! III ends with 'That's Entertainment!' from *The Band Wagon*. It's a list song, laying out all the things that can be called 'entertainment', deliberately including Sophocles and Shakespeare alongside melodrama, comedy, "the lights on the lady in tights" and "the clown with his pants falling down". It takes place on a theatre stage, with odds and ends of scenery on it. In the course of the number, the performers (Fred Astaire, Jack Buchanan, Cyd Charisse, Nanette Fabray and Oscar Levant) move from standing close together to ranging over the whole area of the stage, using flats, hoists and props in a celebration of entertainment's wit, energy and spontaneity. Yet in all the song, there is not one mention of anything that could be called black, even though the music and dance called upon could not have existed without recourse to black (and other) cultural forms.

I've always rather balked at the final words of 'That's Entertainment!': "The gag may be waving a flag/That began with a Mr. Cohan/Hip hooray; the American way/The world is a stage/The stage is a world/Of entertainment!" But I've always assumed this was excessive European sensitivity on my part. Now, though, I can't help reflecting on the colour of entertainment in America itself and the way this has been processed so consummately by the MGM musical.

Always out of the frame

I knew I had been accepted by the crew when, as I came onto the set one day, the Best Boy Electric called out, "Here comes that sketch dude, posing as an awesome painter!" But some asides had a darker tone: as I passed, the male lead's gold-encrusted hair stylist from Miami Beach would snarl, "Hey Rembrandt." I'd declined, through a lack of skill, to forge a document on his behalf, and so had not come up to his definition of an artist.

I am that rare thing on a film set, an old-fashioned artist, a painter. I would fix my boxes of watercolours to a small board, and holding my ancient Heath Robinson equipment with one hand I would splash away with the other, attempting to describe the action taking place before my eyes. These watercolours I would then turn into large drawings and paintings in my studio.

As a painter I am interested in making pictures of communities at work and play. I remember seeing a short piece of film, of a couple lying on a bed. The camera pulls away, and as the couple recede into the distance, we see them surrounded in their illuminated isolation by all the paraphernalia of lights and equipment and the indifferent crew bathed in shadow. There is also a photograph of Jean Renoir up on the camera dolly, focusing down on Françoise Arnoul stretched out seductively in her nightdress on the bed in *French Can Can*, which perfectly captures this same contrast. Film does not reflect on its own nature (Truffaut's *Day For*

John Dewe Mathews
on his love of film
sets and his
attempts to paint
what goes on in
front and behind
the camera

Night is an exception). I wanted to make pictures of the whole scene using the film crew as a visual device to explore the dichotomy existing between the real world of the film-makers and the illusory world of the created image, thereby capturing double illusions on canvas or paper.

I had been invited to South Carolina by a friend of mine, a female film director making a 'Window Movie', a mere \$14 million dollar project that sits between two blockbusters. The first words I heard on my first day were "Drop me a gobo head"; after that, "Nail that Baby plate to the Flyer," and, "Let's steal some sunshine." Each day I would slowly advance and retreat to and from the centre of the action (the star, the director and the camera crew), picking up these magical formulae as I passed through a homogenous mass of technical movement, which only stopped for the First Assistant Director's words "Nobody walks! Nobody talks!" and – of course – for food, which was provided by a group of rock'n'rollers from Tennessee called the Tomcats: each day, vast steaks and swordfish and mountains of everything. As everybody broke for lunch at high speed, the Texan gaffer languidly remarked, "Elvis has left the auditorium." I was behind him in the queue for food; one of the Tomcat chefs asked him what he wanted in his salad, he replied, "Drag it through the garden."

Behind this language lay a world of intrigue which, like the salad, I was soon

dragged into; the world so well described by Christopher Isherwood in *Prater Violet*: "The film studio today is really the palace of the sixteenth century. There one sees what Shakespeare saw: the absolute power of the tyrant, the courtiers, the flatterers, the jesters, the cunningly ambitious favourites. There are great men who are suddenly disgraced. There is the most insane extravagance and unexpected parsimony over a few pence. There are even two or three honest advisers. These are the court fools."

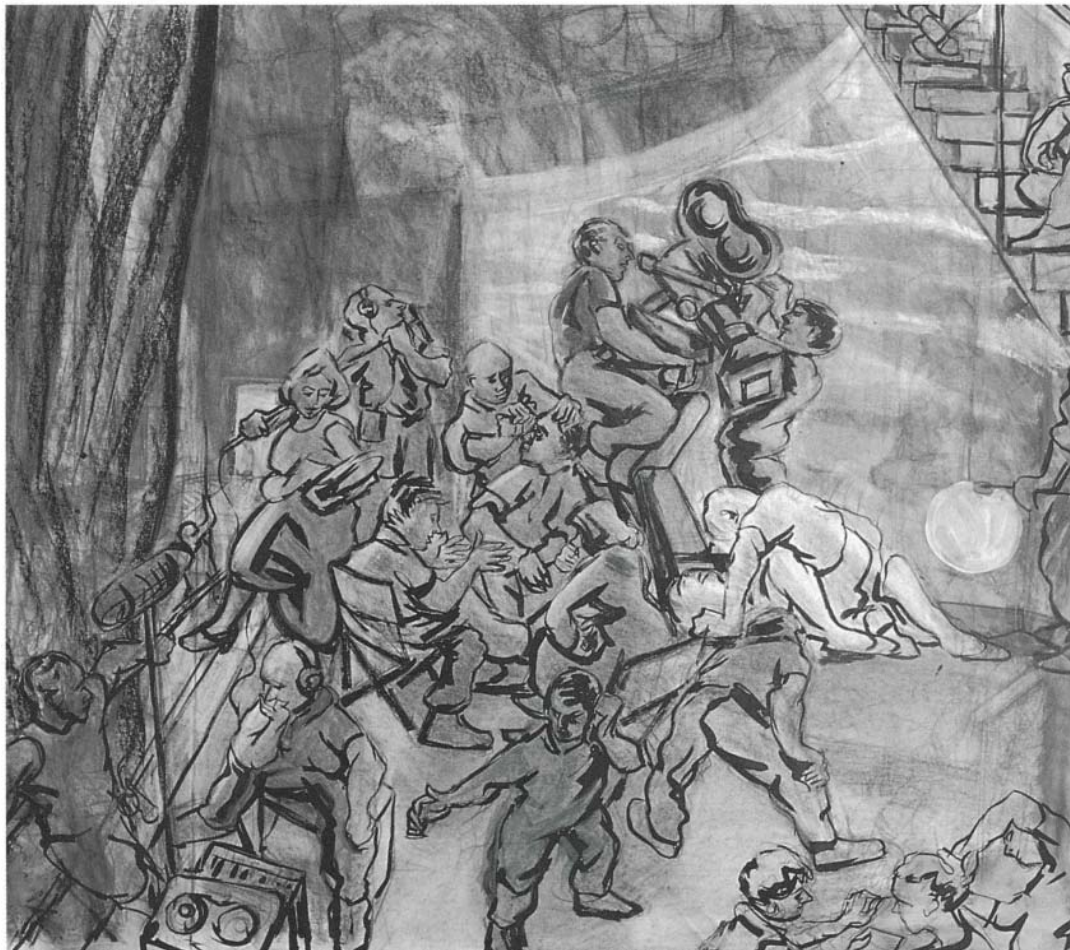
All the directors on whose films I've drawn have introduced me to the leading stars (Hi Arnie! Hi Sharon!). I thought I had risen to the top of the ladder, but soon found the star was always surrounded by acolytes (personal hairdresser, make-up artist, bouncer, press-agent and personal friends) who went with them everywhere, laughing and applauding or obeying every word that passed from their lips. I would attempt to say "Hi!" again, but the star would pass by, looking right through me. I would quickly step back into the shadows trying to avoid falling over a cable. It is impossible to draw them – many own copyright on their own image. Their look exists only on celluloid, vetoed by personal agent, film company or various producers.

Lena and Joe were the principle stand-ins, and all the muscled grips and sparks in this misogynist world fancied Lena. There was a big rape scene: wisecracks flew between stand-ins and crew as the BFLs (Big Fucking Lights), overhead griffons and flags were positioned and tested, as the sound crew tried out low-level booming and as the crew ran the crab dolly up and down the tracking. Lena and Joe were warm, jovial and affectionate, and loved being drawn. For me they were the real stars: as the First Assistant Cameraman remarked, "The best people are always out of frame".

As an artist I want to represent something beyond glamour; the humour, the awkwardness and the frenzy of it all, the obtrusiveness of the camera and all these groups of people indifferent to one another, but welded together in a common objective. Sometimes, in the shadows, just out of earshot, would lurk various groups of agents and producers, affectionately known as the cobra or the python ("They are such good liars it is best to tell the truth"). They would say, "We are fighting time," as they argue with each other over the financial repercussions of having unreliable and temperamental stars, or they battle with the director and the set designer over the excessive cost of building work and the overrunning schedule. Creative problems are never discussed as "they only exist in the imagination of the director and DOP."

Sometimes producers (also known as "alarmists sitting on their thrones") would approach me and say "Tomorrow is a closed set, so don't come in please!" I would pack up my equipment that evening and the director, knowing the situation, would wink as I passed. Nothing was closed to our imaginations.

John Dewe Mathews' 'Images of Film' is at the Eagle Gallery, London EC1, until 4 November



'Rehearsal for a Cinematic Rape 1', 1995: Pencil/Ink/Pastel on Paper, by John Dewe Mathews

QUINLAN'S
ILLUSTRATED DIRECTORY OF
FILM CHARACTER ACTORS

★★★★★ DAVID QUINLAN ★

COMPILED BY DAVID QUINLAN
WITH CHRIS WATKINS

**British
Film Studios**

An illustrated history

Patricia Warren

The cover of the book 'British Film Studios: An illustrated history' by Patricia Warren. The main image is a large black and white photograph of a film set. In the foreground, a man in a dark suit and white shirt is leaning over a table, looking at something. In the background, a woman in a dark dress and hat is standing. To the right of the main image, there are several smaller circular and rectangular inset images. These include logos for 'KALING STUDIOS' and 'BRITISH FILM STUDIOS', as well as various scenes from films and studio interiors.

A black and white portrait of Robert Altman. He is shown from the chest up, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has a beard and mustache. His right arm is raised, with his hand near his head. He is wearing a dark shirt and a watch on his left wrist. The background is dark and out of focus. At the top of the image, the text "Robert Altman" is written in a large, serif font, with "Hollywood Survivor" in a smaller font below it. At the bottom left, the name "Daniel O'Brien" is written in a small, sans-serif font.

—

**Our new
quarterly review
of recently
published books.
Short reviews
by Ian Christie,
Leslie Felperin,
and Nick Roddick**

Screenplays: pulp or the art of fiction, asks Will Self

Play things

Natural Born Killers

screenplay by Quentin Tarantino,
Faber and Faber, 119pp, £7.99,
ISBN 0 571 17617 8

Withnail & I

by Bruce Robinson, Bloomsbury Pub,
128pp, £6.99, ISBN 0 7475 2358 4

I've never sat through a Quentin Tarantino film and I have no intention of ever doing so. I don't want to make great claims for my perspicacity in this matter, but the fact remains that as regards this so-called auteur, I find myself in the reverse of the normal situation regarding popular cultural phenomena. On the other hand, I've sat through several films written by Bruce Robinson – and I've seen his directorial debut, *Withnail & I*, several times. This is a film that has achieved cult status in England, arguably the cinematic equivalent of being a “minor literary classic”.

In a way these two artists couldn't be more different, and yet both – in the screenplays examined here – attempt to give dimensionality to the experience of life, in cultures characterised by anomie and desolation.

It often happens that you pick up on some new artist, early on in their career, before the media have wallpapered the empyrean with their likeness. Once this has occurred you feel your enthusiasm for them falling off. Every time someone says, “Oh, aren't they fabulous...” you feel like saying, “I know, and what's more I knew long before types like you began to leap on their bandwagon.”

With Tarantino and I, exactly the opposite has occurred. I went to see *Reservoir Dogs* on its theatrical release. I appreciated the snappy quality of the dialogue in the opening scenes of the film, and I understood – or at least thought I understood – what the writer/director was aiming at when he bedded Tim Roth down on a futon of blood for the next 30 minutes of action, following the unsuccessful heist. But when I got to the torture scene involving the ear and the cut-throat razor, I balled up my popcorn, dumped it on the floor and quit the cinema.

It may have been the supposedly ironic counterpoint of the backing music – Stealer's Wheel doing ‘Stuck in the Middle with You’ – or it may have been the threat of steel on cartilage, but most probably it was the fear that the conjunction of the two would make me puke my guts out. Not, in my opinion, an aesthetic reaction worth experiencing.

True Romance managed to pass me by. By now the chatter concerning Tarantino's ‘post-modern’ and ‘iconic’ attributes was becoming a babble;

and although I attended the London premiere, I couldn't quite manage the crawl from bar to screening.

Some time later Miramax Films sent me a copy of the screenplay of *Pulp Fiction*, with some suggestion that I might be interested in novelising the film. In a way the idea amused me. It pointed up the real possibility of film finally eclipsing literary fiction as the dominant narrative medium. Of course, novelising screenplays is nothing new, but for someone such as me – who regards the integrity of the form I work in extremely highly – to undertake such wilful unoriginality would have been to cede the high ground to the *cinéastes*.

In the event this wasn't the issue. I thought the screenplay hackneyed, exploitative and crass. The brouhaha that surrounded the film's release left me cold, and it wasn't until it eventually cropped up locally that I got round to attending. I lasted all of ten minutes on this occasion, before walking.

Thus I have the rare distinction of having been way in the avant-garde of the Tarantino backlash, which I'm glad to see is now ponderously getting underway. When the offer came to review the screenplay of *Natural Born Killers*, I balked. Would I have the wherewithal to attempt a showing of another Tarantino-scripted film? Predictably the answer was no. After five minutes of the thing I decided that as I was witnessing a film dedicated to displaying short lives, I was justified in arguing that life was too short to bother with it.

As for the screenplay itself, well, while it's almost always egregious to quote the back cover blurb, in this case Faber and Faber have so delightfully distorted the truth that I feel I must: “This script is of special interest as a map of Tarantino's original intentions of the film,” they write, “much tauter and leaner than the completed film, Tarantino's mesmerising gift for language creates an impact that is as unsettling as it is poetic.”

Well, obviously I cannot comment on the divergences between Tarantino's screenplay and Oliver Stone's direction, but what I can say unequivocally is that *Natural Born Killers* exhibits absolutely no poetic language whatsoever. Indeed, it could be argued that if the screenplay has any virtue at all, it is as an anti-style guide, a set of instructions on how to avoid even the meanest prosody getting into film dialogue. As for “tauter and leaner”, I will say this much. It took me all of 50 minutes to read *Natural Born Killers*, and for that I am profoundly grateful.

Of course, the first point that needs to be made about the screenplay is how blindingly unoriginal it is. The

romanticisation of the outlaw on the run, racing from location to location in a hail of bullets, is a perennial theme in American popular culture. It's no accident that Mickey Knox – Tarantino's ‘outlaw’ – refers to *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, when contemplating a shoot-out to the death with the deputies guarding the penitentiary. And, of course, the same kind of themes have been dealt with in numerous other films, most notably Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* and more importantly Terrence Malick's *Badlands*.

Indeed, *Badlands* foreshadows *Natural Born Killers* in almost every respect: the pathological ‘love’ of the two protagonists for each other, the parricide that sets them off on their killing spree, the obsessive attention of the media that encourages popular hero worship. But whereas the former film was tense, elegiac and haunting (summed up by the use of Orff's ‘Musica Poetica’ on the soundtrack), the screenplay for the latter is mere slapstick, Looney Tunes for perpetual adolescents. And, of course, there's nothing new about the American cinema examining the extraordinary popular delusion of the press – one thinks unhesitatingly of *The Sweet Smell of Success* or *Ace in the Hole*.

Some people affect to find the endless referentiality of Tarantino's screenplays evidence of his deep and meaningful absorption in his craft (what among writers is termed ‘intertextuality’). I find it merely irritating. When Wayne Gayle – the television journalist who wishes to scoop an interview with the eponymous anti-heroes – is razzing his team up with the prospect by comparing it with other, similar coups, Roger, the soundman quips: “This is Raymond Burr witnessing the destruction of Tokyo by Godzilla.”

This is reductionist irony: something potentially important being enmired in the trivia of references to the ephemeral. It's basically the same gag when in this script – as in all of Tarantino's others – the characters maunder on endlessly about fast food. In this one we are treated to the rich irony of the television crew's obsession with chocolate-cream filled doughnuts.

It's no wonder that Tarantino's most strident acolytes are those who wish to democratise culture by yanking the low up to the status of the high. Having educated themselves by lying on couches watching afternoon television re-runs, they wish to drag the rest of us down to their potato-level. The idea that this screenplay represents a moral condemnation of the media's role in the promotion of murder-as-mass-entertainment is another piece of flummery.



Bibulous progress: Paul McGann and Richard E. Grant in 'Withnail & I'

Tarantino's imagination is too much of a plateau to provide the necessary vantage point from which to see this truth. Thus *all* of the characters in the story are unredeemably awful – and worse, stupid.

There are also irritating errors of continuity in the screenplay. Initially it is said that the Knoxes will be lobotomised at the mental hospital. Latterly, they are only to be subjected to ECT. Which is it? There is a flatness about the speeches that means they don't serve their purpose. Thus, Neil Pope, a film director who has made an exploitative feature about the murderous duo, and who is 'interviewed' about it in the documentary-within-this-feature, says of the Knoxes' story: "Yet amidst the violence and murder and carnage, you've got the structure of a Wagnerian love story."

Two pages later, in the context of the same 'documentary', the psychiatrist says: "Basically, the very thing that makes them most lethal is the exact same thing that captures the public's hearts and minds – Mickey and Mallory's operatic devotion to each other." The feel of both phrases, as well as the content, is exactly the same.

If it is the characters of Mickey and Mallory themselves that are meant to redeem the script, by providing language that justifies our belief in them as almost supernatural characters, *übermenschen*, then here again Tarantino fails. Here's Mickey's climactic, self-justifying speech: "Everybody thought I'd gone crazy... I wasn't crazy. But when I was holding the shotgun, it all became clear.

I realised for the first time my one true calling in life. I'm a natural born killer." Wow! What a gift for poetic language!

With the script for *Natural Born Killers*, my pleasure in reading lay chiefly in the fact I wasn't having to watch the film that was made from it. With Bruce Robinson's script for *Withnail & I*, it was pleasure pure and simple. If anything this screenplay reads better than the film watched. And the film was very good indeed.

The comparisons between the two screenplays are instructive. While there is no edict demanding that the direction notes for film scripts be in any sense 'literary' (the scene-setting stuff is, after all, intended to be visual), Tarantino eschews anything but the most prosaic directions: "The sirens and choppers draw nearer." Robinson, on the other hand, manages to make his directions both visually evocative and interesting. "Despite the squalor the room is furnished with antiques... heirlooms and other quality stuff... an indescribable *mélange* of stuff crowds a low table. A large Victorian globe of the world soars above bacon rinds. *Objets d'art* and breakfast remains compete for space." This is verging on the novelistic. Throughout, for directions, Robinson allows himself the use of metaphor (something Tarantino may well think is a pill, like Darvon, 'Metaphor™'). Thus the drinkers in a pub have "faces like rotten beetroots"; there are also elegant turns of phrase: "the car vanishes into a perspective of street and exhaust fumes"; and intense, poetic evocations of topography itself: "the land is in ruins and so is the sky."

While ostensibly a farcical account of the bibulous progress of two failing

actors on the cusp of the 70s who move from squalor in London to rural idiocy, *Withnail & I* transcends its narrow limits as a two-hander to become a haunting requiem for a generation and an era – that is at one and the same time a kind of prolepsis, or anticipation. How unusual, to read a script set in the past and find it validly commenting on events still in the future. In Marwood and Withnail, Robinson has created an apotheosis of the idea of romantic, artistic youth as countercultural rebel. I feel sure that part of the reason for the film's enduring popularity is the sense contemporary youth have that the 60s were the last time when rebellion like this was valid.

Throughout Robinson imbues his characters with the emotional intensity of youth. This is an *iterative* intensity, with undue emphasis placed on key words, producing poetic stress. Early on, Marwood (the "I" of the title) finds himself sitting in a cafe contemplating the shock-horror headlines of the tabloids that surround him: "13 million people have to cope with this? And vicars and All Bran and rape? And I'm sitting in this fucking shack and I can't cope with Withnail?"

Robinson has the great skill as a writer of making dialogue simultaneously believable and funny. The first big bellylaugh of this script comes for me on page eight, when Withnail is extemporising on the homicidal character of a sportsman on steroids: "He'd probably tell you what he was gonna do before he did it. 'I'm gonna pull your head off.' 'No, please. Please don't pull my head off.' 'I'm gonna pull your head off, because I don't like your head....'" Here, Withnail is 'doing' two voices. With its stress and

repetition, the effect is near hysteria.

And there are many, many more to follow. Robinson also manages to capture the distinctive voices of his characters in a way that shows the ear of someone like Tarantino up for the pewter it is. Marwood and Withnail are involved in one of those intense, youthful relationships where their quips and mannerisms are swapped back and forth. When Danny the drug dealer enters the picture, another voice is heard: "I don't advise a haircut man. All hairdressers are in the employment of the government. Hairs are your aerals. They pick up signals from the cosmos and transmit them directly into the brain. This is the reason bald-headed men are uptight."

In Danny, Robinson encapsulates all of the spaced-out exegestists of the alternative culture, and presents them as one, triumphant comic creation. But in Montague Withnail ("Uncle Monty") he goes one further by creating a character that is at one and the same time richly comic and full of tragic pathos. Monty possesses attributes of the nasty *buffo*: he is gay, he is bombastic, he is obese – and yet with his propensity for quoting Auden and his Epicureanism, he is still sympathetic.

Withnail persuades Monty to lend him and Marwood Monty's cottage in the country, on the basis that Marwood is gay and struggling with coming to terms with his sexuality. This leads to a burlesque of misconstrual, that ends with poor Monty giving a despairing speech: "I know how you feel and how difficult it is. And that's why you mustn't hold back, ruin your youth as I nearly did over Eric. It's like a tide. Give in to it boy... It's society's crime. Not ours."

But earlier Monty has been allowed further license by Robinson, license that gives him one of the keynote state-of-the-nation statements with provide the real codas for the script: "Ah my boys, my boys, we're at the end of an age. We live in a land of weather forecasts, and breakfasts that 'set in'. Shat on by Tories, shovelled up Labour. And here we are. We three. Perhaps the last island of beauty in the world."

Throughout Robinson studs this script with neat descriptive tropes, "My heart's beating like a fucked clock", and "Monty's stares are hard enough to itch" being two of them. Whether in the directions or the dialogue they are equally apposite. *Withnail & I* is the film script as literature. If only more of them were like this – but there aren't. Many of the screenplays currently being published in a great gout of publicity are worth picking up for technical interest, or for comparison with the films that have been made from them, but few are worth reading *purely* for their language. We should not expect this to be the case. The screenplay is to the house. Some scaffoldings – such as Robinson's *Withnail & I* – allow for overnight stays on boarded platforms, but even so I wouldn't want to live there.

Film criticism

The American Poet at the Movies: A Critical History

by Laurence Goldstein, University of Michigan Press, 290pp, \$14.95, ISBN 0 472 08318 X

As the poet Louis Simpson writes, "Every American is a film critic./ We come by it naturally./ They don't have to teach it in school." This book sets out to chronicle this intimate relationship between film and American poets, beginning with Vachel Lindsay, and concludes with the author's own (rather intriguing) poetry. Goldstein sensitively describes both film's impact on form as well as content on a broad range of poets. Truly lyrical stuff on an epic scale.

Another Fine Dress:

Role-Play in the Films of Laurel and Hardy

by Jonathan Sanders, Cassell, 232pp, £13.99, ISBN 0 304 33206 2

No doubt many a straight-laced fan of 'the boys' will be shocked at the very suggestion, but Sanders' assiduous undressing of the queer subtexts throughout Laurel and Hardy's oeuvre is persuasive and fascinating, written with brio, scholarly tenacity and manifest love for the films.

Auteur/Provocateur:

The Films of Denys Arcand

edited by André Loiselle and Brian McIlroy, Flicks Books, 195pp, £14.95, ISBN 0 948911 95 6

Any book on one of the most distinctive yet under discussed film-makers of the past 25 years is welcome, this one particularly so for the details it gives on Arcand's early documentaries and radical films, which are hardly known on this side of the Atlantic. Comprises six articles – one locating the director within Québécois culture – an interview, a filmography, and a bibliography. This is the way film books used to be.

Between Stage and Screen:

Ingmar Bergman Directs

by Egil Tønqvist, Amsterdam UP, 243pp, £24.50, ISBN 90 5356 137 4

Bergman has worked longer in the theatre, and in radio and television, than in cinema. This erudite though never ponderous study compares a selection of his work in all these media, and in doing so creates a real context missing from many accounts of the films alone, as well as shedding valuable light on Bergman's place in the Scandinavian tradition of Ibsen and Strindberg.

The Cinema of Oliver Stone

by Norman Kagan, Continuum Pub., 285pp, \$24.95 (hb), ISBN 0 8264 0817 6
Whether one loves or hates his films, there's no denying that Oliver Stone is a significant director, whose work deserves a serious critical assessment. Unfortunately, this isn't it. Instead, it's a slapped-together collation of

production histories and quotes from reviews, cemented by trite observations. Perhaps it's part of a conspiracy...

Dark Alchemy:

The Films of Jan Švankmajer

edited by Peter Hames, Flicks Books, 202pp, £14.95, ISBN 0 948911 96 4

Probably the greatest living 3-D animator, Švankmajer deserves more than this. Though there is much to recommend this collection, especially its reprinting of rare material and provision of a good bibliography and filmography, a broader range of analyses and critical perspectives would have been welcome.

Deathtripping: The Cinema of Transgression

by Jack Sargent, Creation Books, 256pp, £11.95, ISBN 1 871592 29 1

The cinema of transgression is defined here as a breed of confrontational and provocative underground film-making, originating with such artists as Warhol, Waters and Kuchar, later including the work of Nick Zedd, Casandra Stark and Todd Phillips, and drawing on hard porn, 'splatter' films and the avant-garde along the way. Combines interviews with spiky criticism.

Directed by Dorothy Arzner

by Judith Mayne, Indiana UP, 209pp, £13.99, ISBN 0 253 20896 3

Part biography, part critical assessment of the films (the lesser-seen and the better-known – such as the renowned *Dance, Girl, Dance*), and part examination of the reception of Arzner's image as a woman director and a closet lesbian, Mayne's study is subtle and supple. She agilely builds from (and politely critiques) the 70s feminist criticism of Arzner, making many cogent points in the light of recent gender studies.

Engaging Characters:

Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema

by Murray Smith, Oxford UP, 265pp, £13.99, ISBN 0 19 818347 X

Given that emotion is one of the most fundamental constituents of the cinematic experience, it's surprising how few models film studies has adapted for theorising how movies make us feel. Psychoanalysis has been the dominant method, but Smith gingerly rejects this in favour of a combination of cognitive psychology and anthropology, to find a new way to conceive of such basic concepts as "spectatorship" and "identification" (with *The Accused* as a fertile test case). Intriguing and salient.

Feminisms in the Cinema

edited by Laura Pietropaolo and Ada Testaferri, Indiana UP, 229pp, £11.99, ISBN 0 253 20928 5

A very mixed bag generated from a conference, this collects stimulating and turgid papers from established academic stars (Laura Mulvey, Teresa de Lauretis) and women film-makers (Trinh T. Minh-ha, Monika Treut) alike. Inevitably, it lacks coherence as a

collection, but Marguerite Waller's thoughtful essay on Liliana Cavan's *Portiere di notti* (*The Night Porter*) is one of the picks of the litter.

The Film Spectator: From Sign to Mind

edited by Warren Buckland, Amsterdam UP, 258pp, £24.50, ISBN 90 5356 131 5

This anthology of material mainly translated from French is dedicated to the late Christian Metz, founding father of film semiotics, and his mission to tease out the conundrums of film meaning. Franco Casetti emerges as perhaps Metz's most inspiring follower, but the papers as a whole bear witness to an impressive vitality and rigour in the new semiotics.

From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun:

Aviation, Nationalism and Popular Cinema

by Michael Paris, Manchester UP, 218pp, £12.99, ISBN 0 7190 4074 4

Assuming we need one, this is surely the definitive book on aeroplane movies, admirably researched (it considers films made in Europe, Japan and the USSR as well as in the US), fluently written and persuasive. Paris generally maintains an excellent balance between production details, plot summary and the social history of the sub-genre.

Hong Kong Action Cinema

by Bey Logan, Titan Books, 191pp, £14.99, ISBN 1 85286 540 7

Informed, comprehensive, and vibrantly illustrated in full colour, this lively reference work packs more punch per page than Bruce Lee dosed up on ginseng tea. Covers not only the Great Dragon, but also Jackie Chan, John Woo, such actors as Chow Yun Fat and Cynthia Rothrock, such directors as Sammo Hung and Tsui Hark, and much more.

Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts

by Brigitte Peucker, Princeton UP, 227pp, £13.95, ISBN 0 691 00281 9

The relationship of film to writing and painting – "in-between" as Rudolf Arnheim put it – has fascinated theorists from Vachel Lindsay through Eisenstein to Barthes and Deleuze. Peucker takes her bearings from the writings of Kleist and Diderot for this agile, wide-ranging reflection on film's intrinsic hybridity and its uneasy relation with the body, from *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* to Peter Greenaway.

The Ghost and Mrs Muir

by Frieda Grafe, BFI Pub., Film Classic Series, 60pp, £6.99, ISBN 0 85170 484 0

An elegant, intriguing contribution to the Film Classics series, by the German critic Frieda Grafe. It skilfully evokes the world of 20th Century Fox under Darryl Zanuck in the 40s, where the writer Joseph Mankiewicz was competing to make himself the complete modern film-maker, and uncovers layer after layer of irony and wit in a far-from-routine love story between a writer and her ghostly co-author.

The Nickel Was for the Movies:

Film in the Novel from Pirandello to Puig

by Gavriel Moses, University of California Press, 365pp, £33.50, ISBN 0 520 07943 4

Moses brings an extensive critical and theoretical apparatus to bear on his large subject. After a solid account of how film permeates the modernist novels of Pirandello and Nabokov, he offers a tour of the classic Hollywood novel, and ends with shrewd insights into Albert Moravia, Walker Percy and Mañuel Puig. His single most useful contribution is a sophisticated sketch of the film world novel as a distinctive literary genre.

Odd Man Out

by Dai Vaughan, BFI Pub., Film Classics Series, 79pp, £6.99, ISBN 0 85170 493 X

Carol Reed's 1947 film is a magnificent and troubling landmark in the tidy suburbia of British post-war cinema – one of the most genuinely surprising mainstream films ever made in these islands. Dai Vaughan's meticulous analysis certainly pinpoints Reed's use – and systematic misuse – of classic film craft, but adds surprisingly little to one's understanding or appreciation of the film as a whole, least of all in the author's determination to find in it echoes of Camus' *L'Étranger*.

Pier Paolo Pasolini:

Contemporary Perspectives

edited by Patrick Rumble and Bart Testa, University of Toronto Press, 258pp, £11.50, ISBN 0 8020 7737 4

This collection of essays arose out of a 1990 conference in Toronto, which was dedicated to rescuing Pasolini from the hagiography that followed his death 20 years ago this November. The book looks at Pasolini's developing aesthetic and political views and is concerned as much with the poet and novelist as with the film-maker. Mainly for the academic reader.

Pirates and Seafaring Swashbucklers on the Hollywood Screen

by James Robert Parish, McFarland, 288pp, £35.95, ISBN 0 89950 935 5

Some might feel that a £36 book on swashbucklers ought to have had something to say. Not so Mr Parish: after a scant 11 pages of facile introduction, he launches straight into 137 unillustrated filmographies, with plot summaries and excerpts from a few reviews.

Poetics of Cinema

by Raúl Ruiz (translated by Brian Holmes), Editions Dis Voir, 121pp, £12.00, ISBN 2 906571 38 5

The prodigious and prodigal Ruiz confesses he's always had a problem with mainstream movies and asks why a central dramatic conflict must govern everything in them. Why not indulge reverie, indifference, digression – the modes that make Ruiz's own films fascinating to some and baffling to others? This first of three planned volumes of a 'poetics' follows the same principles, enlivened by Ruiz's erudition and relish for philosophical paradox.

Preston Sturges's Vision of America: Critical Analyses of Fourteen Films

Jay Rozgonyi, McFarland, 201pp, £31.05 (hb), ISBN 0 89950 985 1
Rather insipid analyses of 14 of Preston Sturges' films make up the body of this disappointing book. Rozgonyi argues that such celebrated films as *The Lady Eve* and *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* are often subtly critical of American values and institutions – what a surprise!

Projections 4½

in association with *Positif* and edited by John Boorman and Walter Donohue, Faber and Faber, 312pp, £9.99, ISBN 0 571 17609 7
A translation into English of *Positif's* special issue in which film-makers the magazine admired were invited to discuss films they admired, supplemented with a few more essays invited by *Projections*, and with Kevin Brownlow's fine piece on Buster Keaton. Frequently surprising, and full of passion, but a few too many platitudes clutter the path to the odd gem.

Queen of the 'B's': Ida Lupino Behind the Camera

edited by Annette Kuhn, Flicks Books, 202pp, £14.95 ISBN 0 948911 89 1
Appropriately describing itself as "a long overdue reassessment", this fine collection critically examines seven of the gutsy actress-turned-director's gritty films. The standard of writing is consistently high throughout and is supplemented by a filmography of both her theatrical films and her television work.

Wild Strawberries

by Philip and Kersti French, BFI Pub., Film Classics Series, 78pp, £6.99, ISBN 0 85170 481 6
The *famille* French offer here a crisp and informative history of the making of one of Bergman's best known and best loved films, sinuously interwoven with an account of its context within Swedish culture, especially the debt to August Strindberg and Edvard Munch. Only slightly disappointing is a lack of the subjective passion distinguishing the best books in this series.

Cinema history

The Biograph in Battle

by W. K.-L. Dickson, with an introduction by Richard Brown, Flicks Books, 328pp, £35.00, ISBN 0 948911 35 2
Dickson was already well into his third career in cinema when he published this memoir of filming the Boer War. Having led Edison's moving picture research, he helped found the rival Biograph company, then returned to his native Europe to work for its British branch. His account of "actuality" filming with the giant Biograph camera – big enough to lunch beneath – is both a classic of war reporting and early cinema, well served by this fine facsimile reprint.



Things to Come
by Christopher Frayling, BFI Pub., Film Classics Series, 83pp, £6.99, ISBN 0 85170 480 8

"Nobody is going to believe that the world is going to be saved by a bunch of people with British accents," was an American

Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did to the Mountains & What the Mountains Did to the Movies

J. W. Williamson, U. of North Carolina P., 325pp, £10.96, ISBN 0 8078 4503 5
This is one of those straightforward images-of-x-in-movies kinds of books, with the variable filled in by hillbillies, usually a source of derision in many Hollywood comedies. Williamson contrasts the fictional stereotypes with the social realities of Appalachian life.

Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896-1930

by Gregory A. Waller, Smithsonian Institution Press, 342pp, \$19.95, ISBN 1 56098 504 6
Waller's meticulous monograph explores the introduction of film exhibition in Lexington, Kentucky, at the very beginning of cinema's century from a variety of angles. Given that the period, the cinema-going habits of the South, and exhibition generally are all under-researched, this is a novel and highly welcome contribution to film studies.

The Mexican Cinema Project

edited by Chon A. Noriega and Steven Ricci, UCLA Film and Television Archive/University of Texas Press, 108pp, \$16.95, ISBN 0 292 75558 9
The catalogue of four exploratory programmes organised by the UCLA Archive provides a useful short guide to Mexican cinema's riches, well illustrated and with a good bibliography. Ana Lopez charts the shifting politics of Mexican cinema's reputation, and Charles Ramirez Berg analyses the distinctive visual perspective that underpins such Fernández-Figueroa classics as *La Perla*.

Pirandello and Film

by Nina daVinci Nichols and Jana O'Keefe Bazzoni, U. of Nebraska P., 248pp, £47.00 (hb), ISBN 0 8032 3336 1
A valuable, scholarly treatment of

distributor's verdict on H. G. Wells' passionate plea for "the commonweal of mankind". Frayling usefully shifts the focus from Wells to the messy reality of the making, a reality fraught with conflicting egos and ambitions. Special attention is paid to the design and music, which are perhaps the film's lasting achievements.

Pirandello's complex and ambivalent relations with cinema, from his avant-garde novel *Shoot!* through the various silent and sound treatments of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in which the author himself would have starred.

Psycho: Behind the Scenes of the Classic Chiller

by Janet Leigh with Christopher Nickens, Pavilion Books, 197pp, £12.99, ISBN 1 85793 743 0
As *Psycho* continues to fascinate, it probably seemed a good idea to get the view from the shower, as it were. Unfortunately this lamely padded as-told-to account offers little new information about the production or its grisly reputation, beyond laying to rest a few legends. Yes, it really was Janet in the shower, wrinkling her skin over seven damp days for Mr Hitchcock.

Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film

by Patricia R. Zimmermann, Indiana UP, 187pp, £11.99, ISBN 0 253 20944 7
One of the most original and stimulating academic film books to come out this quarter. Zimmermann perceptively links feminism, sociology and film theory with spectacularly thorough research, using a range of primary sources to build a persuasive and mobile model of the discourse in which amateur film is embedded, from 1897 to the video boom of the present. Economical but ever lucid with theory, her prose is always elegant as she unfolds this fascinating and under-examined history.

Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative

by Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron, Rutgers UP, 252pp, £19.95, ISBN 0 8135 2160 2
The Affrons' superbly illustrated study of set design in film goes well beyond the mere historical record. After a survey of changing industry

and studio practice, they offer a general theory of film decor, backed up by four case studies. All the famous sets and designers get their due, as do a range of less familiar achievements. The book includes shrewd assessments of how the profession sees itself and how it is seen.

Thomas Edison and His Kinetographic Motion Pictures

by Charles Musser, Rutgers UP, 62pp, £12.99, ISBN 0 8135 2210 2
An immaculate and handsomely illustrated summary of Edison's involvement with moving pictures from 1888 to 1918, by the doyen of contemporary Edison scholars. As befits an Edison Historic Site publication, Musser stresses the scale of the Wizard's achievement without entirely explaining why he seemed to take so little direct interest in his most magical invention.

Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History

by Robert A. Rosenstone, Harvard UP, 271pp, £10.50 ISBN 0 674 94098 9
In these essays, Rosenstone writes with the fervour of the convert (and occasionally the loopiness), urging historians to admit that film can often do what books can't. The sceptical fellow-historians he's addressing would probably beg to differ, but Rosenstone is really rooting for modernist or post-modern cinema – the likes of Alex Cox, Chris Marker and Trinh T. Minh-ha – as the only adequate chroniclers of our fractured sense of the past.

Whom God Wishes To Destroy: Francis Coppola and the New Hollywood

by Jon Lewis, Athlone Press, 194pp, £25.00 (hb), ISBN 0 485 30071 0
A little misleadingly subtitled, this book is far more about the career of Coppola than it is about the New Hollywood. Lewis has nothing very new or profound to say about either subject, but he's done a good enough job trawling the archives and stitching it together. Its most interesting sections deal with the production and financing wrangles Coppola entangled himself in.

Media studies

The Cyborg Handbook

edited by Chris Hables Gray with the assistance of Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera and Steven Mentor, Routledge, 480pp, £16.99, ISBN 0 415 90849 3
This is a rare work, one of the first to be truly multi-disciplinary in that it combines scientific research on the technology of cybernetics with the usual waffle on post-modernism and the nature of subjectivity. Nerdy, but occasionally thought-provoking.

Essentials of Mass Communication Theory

Arthur Asa Berger, Sage Publications, 208pp, £12.95, ISBN 0 8039 7357 8
Solid and elegantly written

introduction to its subject, up to speed with the current movements in the field, this is an excellent textbook for first-year students. The layout is well-conceived, and interspersed with Berger's own whimsical cartoons. What a pity it has such a dreary jacket design.

Moving Experiences: Understanding Television's Influences and Effects

by David Gauntlett, John Libbey, *Academia Research Monograph 13*, 148pp, £15.00, ISBN 0 86196 515 9

Crushingly thorough and pitilessly well-researched, this study takes no prisoners as it systematically demolishes every faulty paradigm and poorly controlled experiment that has sought to prove the direct effects of television on behaviour. Well-publicised in the latest media debate on violence, it deserves to be read more rather than merely cited.

On Television and Comedy: Essays on Style, Theme, Performer and Writer

by Barry Putterman, McFarland, 210pp, £25.65, ISBN 0 7864 0067 6

Dividing almost everything into neat polarities – mid-west homeliness versus east-coast sophistication; variety show versus sitcom; personality versus performance – Putterman considers the first half-century of television comedy, mainly in the US, and is alternately insightful and tendentious. Putterman's approach is part polemic, part infectious enthusiasm, part axe-grinding and in fact wholly bereft of austerity, or for that matter rigour.

Out In Culture: Gay, Lesbian and Queer Essays on Popular Culture

Edited by Corey K. Creekmur and Alexander Doty, Cassell, 535pp, £15.99, ISBN 0 302 33488 X

Squaring up against several rival readers in the battle for gay/lesbian/queer studies syllabi, Creekmur and Doty step into the ring with a heavyweight and eclectic collection of previously reprinted essays, both academic and journalistic, some of them rare classics. In addition to essays on a wide range of films, it offers a dossier of Hitchcock studies and a clutch of essays on popular music. Patchy, but a good price-to-volume ratio.

Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters

by Judith Halberstam, Duke UP, 215pp, £14.95, ISBN 0 8223 1663 3

Working through various literary and cinematic representations of "monstrosity" (here defined loosely enough to encompass both the literary manifestations of Dracula and films about serial killers), Halberstam's critical methodology owes much to such queer theorists as Judith Butler, while also walking the well-trodden path of psychoanalytic theory. Competent but a little tired.

Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture and the Iranian Revolution

by Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and



Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews
edited by Sidney Gottlieb, Faber and Faber, 339pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 571 17606 2

Gottlieb claims that Hitch 'authorised' even if he didn't 'author' most of the occasional

Ali Mohammadi, *University of Minnesota Press*, 225pp, £11.95, ISBN 0 8166 2217 5
Given the ayatollahs' hostility to most things western, it might seem surprising that the media played any part in Iran's revolution. But this is about how such 'small media' as cassette recorders and photocopied leaflets had a vital role – and its timely message to media-studies is that these can be more important than the traditional 'big media' of newspapers, television and cinema (which the new regime interestingly decided to subsidise).

Soviet Hieroglyphics: Visual Culture in Late Twentieth-Century Russia

edited by Nancy Condee, *Indiana UP/BFI Pub.*, 179pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 85170 459 X

Just as cinema long sustained Soviet myths, so it is now helping to unravel and even replace those myths. Among the rather uneven essays in this collection covering various media, the reflections on transitional cinema stand out, especially Katerina Clark on parodic soundtracks, Yampolsky on the paths of destroyed monuments, and a study of the enigmatic Kira Muratova.

Television Form and Public Address

John Corner, Edward Arnold, 200pp, £12.99, ISBN 0 304 56753 8

This ambitious study attempts to analyse the relationship between "communicative forms of television and their social agency". In other

pieces collected here, and works hard to invest them with a significance that only some have. Best are those where Hitch rails against stifling British censorship and gentility, and the later interviews that unleash his manic passion for technical sleight of hand.

words, Corner explores how news programmes, documentaries and advertising tackle issues in the public's interest and how they interest the public. Dense, but well-sustained.

Television Research: A Directory of Conceptual Categories, Topic Suggestions and Selected Sources

by Ronald L. Jacobson, McFarland, 138pp, £29.95, ISBN 0 7864 0033 1

A surprisingly intriguing pedagogic tool, despite its rather dull title, this suggests areas of study for television research organised alphabetically ("Advertising" to "Women"), with suggested topics of study and brief but useful bibliographies. It may offer useful tips for academics stuck for a lecture topic and students seeking questions for their dissertations.

What Are you Looking At?: Queer Sex, Style and Cinema

by Paul Burston, Cassell, 192pp, £10.99, ISBN 0 304 34300 5

Burston's collection of journalism past and polemics present rifle through a broad range of topics, from the imperial new clothes of 'New Queer Cinema', via *Alien*?, to being underwhelmed by the fabled appeal of Keanu Reeves. Overall, Burston is better at trouncing things than trilling their praises, but even at his worst (the interviews), he is never less than provocative. At his best, his scathing prose cuts through sanctified pieties like surgical secateurs.

Biographies and memoirs

Bette: An Intimate Biography of Bette Midler

by George Mair, Aurum Press, 312pp, £16.95, ISBN 1 85410 378 4

Picks up from where Midler's own book, *A View From a Broad*, left off, and throws light on a few of the latter's cloudy spots, particularly the early stormy relationship with Barry Manilow.

Charlie Chaplin: Intimate Close-Ups
by Georgia Hale

edited by Heather Kiernan, Scarecrow Press, 215pp, £29.95 (hb), ISBN 0 8108 3003 5

Georgia Hale starred in *The Gold Rush* and formed a close bond with Chaplin that was to last years. These are her memoirs of their relationship, supplemented with letters and notes. Deeply infatuated with Chaplin, the guileless Hale comes across as an *ingénue* straight out of a Henry James novel, unaware how deep and murky the waters she's swum into are. A touching read, it offers an unique portrait of Chaplin.

De Niro

by John Parker, Victor Gollancz, 255pp, £16.99, ISBN 0 575 05876 5

The reclusive De Niro must be a biographer's nightmare and Parker seems to have enjoyed few special favours from his subject, often having to fall back on blow-by-blow accounts of De Niro's legendary non-interviews. However, what emerges about his Greenwich Village bohemian family background is intriguing, as is the evidence of a lifelong involvement with *The Method*.

Eddie Cantor: A Life in Show Business

by Gregory Kuseluk, McFarland, 430pp, £35.95 (hb), ISBN 0 7864 0096 X

A monomaniacally detailed *schlep* through the life of a comedian who was as popular as the Marx Brothers or W. C. Fields in his day, yet remains only a distant memory now for most people. Koseluk seems very much in love with his subject and is good with biographical detail though fairly weak on critical judgment.

Fellini on Fellini

edited by Constanzo Constantini, Faber and Faber, 202pp, £15.99, ISBN 0 571 17544 9

Constantini claims to have known Fellini since the 50s and interviewed him almost every year, but without, as he admits, ever being allowed to see "the centre of his being". More centre would certainly have helped this ragged rehearsal of Fellini's career, as would less flatulent questions: they veer from the hurling of intellectual "influences" at a puzzled Fellini to such gems as "What do you think about relations between men and women in Italy?"

Gracie Fields: The Authorized Biography

by David Bret, Robson Books, 260pp, £16.95, ISBN 0 86051 958 9

Histories of British cinema still tend to patronise Gracie Fields, one of the only British stars of the 30s able to dictate her own terms to Hollywood. She was a national institution – when she went into hospital in 1939 the Queen was one of 600,000 well-wishers. The films play only a small part in David Bret's relentlessly emotional though detailed and occasionally combative account of living a legend.

The Girl With the Million Dollar Legs: Betty Grable

by Tom McGee, Vestal Press, 416pp, £14.99, ISBN 1 879511 18 5

A lengthy paean of adoration from the irrepressible editor/publisher of the quarterly *Betty Grable's Hollywood*, which charts his idol's career in all the detail one could ever wish for.

James Whale: A Biography

by Mark Gatiss, Cassell, 182pp, £12.99, ISBN 0 304 32861 8

Progressing from unknown actor to top Hollywood director in little more than a year after the stage and screen success of *Journey's End*, James Whale reigned supreme for only half a decade, directing *Frankenstein* along the way, then sank swiftly from view (he made his last feature in 1940, 17 years before his death). Despite being part of Cassell's Gay and Lesbian series, Gatiss' biography draws few parallels between Whale's private life (he was gay) and his movie career. Instead, he provides a well-researched account of the films and, in the turgid field of screen biographies, a refreshingly lucid, well-written and readable book.

Making Movies

by Sidney Lumet, Bloomsbury Pub., 220pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 7475 2270 7

The no-nonsense Lumet, veteran of 40 movies, including such classics as *12 Angry Men* and *Dog Day Afternoon*, takes us right through the process of making movies with exemplary candour. With a background in theatre, and predictably shrewd on writers and actors, Lumet works through "The Cutting Room", "The Mix" and "The Answer Print" to an acid account of the last battle: "The Preview".

Quentin Tarantino: The Man and His Movies

by Jami Bernard, HarperCollins, 288pp, £6.99, ISBN 0 00 255644 8

Tarantino now has more books out about him than films on release directed by him. The cheapest of the three new biographies (see below), Bernard's version of the life and work (such as it is) is probably the densest, best illustrated, and most privy to the man himself.

Quentin Tarantino: Shooting From the Hip

by Wensley Clarkson, Piatkus Books, 312pp, £10.99, ISBN 0 7499 1555 2

Less hagiographic than Bernard's biography (reviewed above) or

Dawson's (see below), this straightforward account sheds the most light into the *wunderkind's* kindergarten years and early life as a "film geek".

Robert Wise on His Films: From Editing Room to Director's Chair

by Sergio Leeman, Silman-James Press, 223p, \$24.95, ISBN 1 879505 24 X

Clearly he's a nice guy, as the tributes from colleagues confirm, and highly successful, in a career that stretches from *Curse of the Cat People* via *The Sound of Music* to *Star Trek The Motion Picture*. But the "personal comments" are so bland – even on re-editing Orson Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* – that you can believe everything they say about impersonal Hollywood technicians. Well-illustrated, well-documented, well-meaning and, well, *dull*.

Tarantino: Inside Story

by Jeff Dawson, Cassell, 199pp, £9.99, ISBN 0 304 33314 X

The anecdotes flow fast and familiar.

Wise Enough to Play the Fool:

A Biography of Duncan Macrae

by Priscilla Barlow, John Donald Pub., 250pp, £14.95, ISBN 0 85976 418 4

It's rare to find a biography with a point of view and even rarer one that radically alters one's own view of its subject. This reviewer always considered Duncan Macrae, the "Wee Cock Sparra" – he appeared in such Scottish films as *Whisky Galore* and *Tunes of Glory* – to be just one among many Scottish character actors. Barlow carefully and determinedly corrects this view, making it clear that Macrae was a lifelong champion of indigenous Scottish theatre who, in the words of his friend and contemporary, Hugh MacDiarmid, was "a true Scot, a great Scot/And as such must not be forgot."

Reference and miscellaneous

Brewer's Cinema:

A Phrase and Fable Dictionary

edited by Jonathan Law, Cassell, 3,000 entries, £20.00 (hb), ISBN 0 304 342235 1
Sketchy, occasionally anecdotal, all-in-one reference work, with entries on key films as well as personalities, genres and technical terms. Those 'in' include: Kenneth Branagh, Jane Campion, and Quentin Tarantino. Omitted: Atom Egoyan, Yasujiro Ozu, and John Woo. Not nearly as good as Ephraim Katz's *Encyclopedia of Film*, but not as expensive either.

The Encyclopaedia of European Cinema

edited by Ginette Vincendeau, Cassell/BFI Pub., 495pp, £19.99, ISBN 0 304 33305 0

A truly heroic effort which explores all the national cinemas of Europe (from Albania to Finland), the major personalities therein (directors and actors mainly), as well as critical issues and significant institutions. The

writing is clear and informative without being dull and the level of accuracy high. This is destined to be an indispensable reference book for every film scholar.

Getting Into Film & TV

by John Burder, Saltcoats Pub., 258pp, £14.95, ISBN 0 9523890 02

Poorly proofed (it asks, "Who is going to pay for your showeeel?", to which one can only reply "I don't know – I haven't trained it yet") and full of the usual banal advice, but Burder has a jovial avuncular prose style that fosters the required illusion of competence.

Hollyweird

by Aubrey Malone, Michael O'Mara Books, 244pp, £4.99, ISBN 1 85479 721 2

Comprised of witty quotes from and assorted facts about Hollywood stars, this is an unabashedly lowbrow trivia book, ideal for keeping in the toilet. The occasional gem makes it a worthwhile purchase (Anthony Hopkins "was able to hypnotize people by pulling on their ear lobes" when young).

How to Make Money Scriptwriting

by Julian Friedmann, Boxtree, 240pp, £11.99, ISBN 0 7522 1647 3

A practical, non-nonsense guide to how to be a competent hack by a savvy insider, this instruction manual is strong on the business side of things (about 90 per cent of the book) and brusque about the creative side (one chapter). It contains useful appendices on contracts, rates and legal terms.

Illustrated Dictionary of Film

Character Actors

by David Quinlan, Batsford, 384pp, £19.99, ISBN 0 7134 7040 2

A companion volume to the same author's *Illustrated Dictionary of Film Stars* and *Illustrated Dictionary of Film Comedy Stars*, containing brief biographies, headshots and full filmographies. One might question the odd detail, but not the scope or usefulness of the whole.

Media Courses UK 1996

edited by Lavinia Orton, BFI Pub., 227pp, £8.99, ISBN 0 85170 521 9

If the British film industry is in an anaemic state just now, it certainly can't be for lack of educational courses. This unfussy and highly useful guide book briefly details the staggering quantity of courses on offer in film, television, video and photography, though it refrains from providing any assessment of their quality. Especially helpful is the reporting of what proportion of practical and academic work each course requires.

Micro-Budget Hollywood: Budgeting (and Making) Feature Films for \$50,000 to \$500,000

by Philip Gaines and David J. Rhodes, Silman-James Press, 220pp, \$17.95, ISBN 1 879505 22 3

The meat and potatoes of the book

won't be a lot of help to anyone trying to make a low-budget film in Europe, since it is very US – not to say LA – specific. But the pudding bit – the interviews with assorted pioneers and other obsessives who have made films for this kind of money – makes *Micro-Budget Hollywood* one of the most entertaining movie books since Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn's classic *Kings of the Bs*.

One Hundred Years of Cinema

Created by Pierre Marchand, English Text by Claire Llewellyn, Kingfisher Kaleidoscopes, 47pp, £12.99, ISBN 1 85697 346 8

This year's most frequent title, here it describes a children's mini-encyclopaedia, complete with stickers, lavishly produced fold-outs, holes in the page to look through and the rest. The text originated in France, so the chapter entitled "In the beginning" is a little one-sided. The interactive features are fairly limited, however, and produced only muted enthusiasm from this reviewer's pre-teen test audience.

The Sound Production Handbook

by Don Atkinson, Blueprint Pub., 227pp, £24.99, ISBN 1 85713 028 6

A comprehensive, lucidly organised guide of interest mainly to sound engineers and recordists in the broadcasting industry. In addition to covering most of the basic and complex procedures, this offers a helpful introduction to personal finance for those in the profession, and glossaries and charts.

The Virgin Encyclopedia of the Movies

edited by Derek Winnert, Virgin, 304pp, £19.99, ISBN 1 85227 536 7

Another centenary cash-in. Though illustrated with some interesting stills (though a few too many of the 350 are the predictable ones), this is a pretty lightweight populist reference book, covering 500 stars, about 250 films and a smattering of history. Weighted mainly towards Hollywood and therefore limited in scope, but it does list the major Academy Awards and Cannes Palme D'Or Winners.

The Ultimate Directory of Silent Screen Performers: A Necrology of Births and Deaths and Essays on 50 Lost Players

by Billy H. Doyle, Scarecrow Press, 368pp, \$49.50, ISBN 0 8108 2958 4

Listing nothing but birth and death dates for 7,500 silent film actors, and prefaced by career essays on 50 'lost players', this book presupposes some community of interest, beyond the handful of known classics, in the vast submerged part of the iceberg that is silent cinema. Thanks to the flourishing public-domain film and video market, this interest does exist in the US, even if it is hampered by restrictive copyright elsewhere. However Doyle's devoted labours will be appreciated by fans and scholars alike.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films plus National Film Theatre preview

Exquisite Tenderness

USA/Germany 1994

Director: Carl Schenkel

Certificate
18
Distributor
Guild
Production Company
Connexion Film
Executive Producers
Rolf Deyhlie
David Korca
Producers
Alan Beattie
Chris Chessier
Willi Baer
Co-producer
Dennis E. Jones
Production Co-ordinators
Tim Hiltz
Joe Fordham
Unit Production Manager
Dennis E. Jones
Location Managers
Todd Pittson
Ted Bauman
Post-production Supervisor
Tim King
Assistant Directors
Robert Lee
Mike Rohl
Karen Sowiak
Pete Whyte
Script Supervisor
Terry Murray
Casting
Hank McCann
Canada:
Michelle Allen
Screenplay
Patrick Cirillo
Based on the screenplay
by Bernard Sloane
Director of Photography
Thomas Burstyn
Camera Operators
Paul Birkett
Keith Murphy
Steadicam Operator
Keith Murphy
Editor
Jimmy B. Frazier
Production Designer
Douglas Higgins
Art Director
Randy Chodak
Set Decorator
Barry Kemp
Set Dressers
Herb Noseworthy
Peter Stoffels
Chris Cooper
Denise Hutniak
John Newell
Draughtswoman
Nancy Ford
Special Effects Supervisor
Gary Paller
Special Effects Foreman
James Paradis
Costume Design
Ushii Zech
Debbie Geaghan
Wardrobe Supervisor
Patricia Galbraith
Make-up Supervisor
Jan Newman
Special Make-up Effects
Steve Johnson
Prosthetics
X.F.X.
Hairstylist
Jill Winston
Title Design
Phill Norman
Titles/Opticals
F-Stop
Music
Christopher Franke
Music Performed by
Berlin Symphonic Film
Orchestra
Music Editor
Lisa Kauppi
Song
"Lollipop" by Beverly
Ross, Julius Dixon,
Edward B. Marks,

performed by
The Chordettes
Sound Design
John Fasal
Supervising Sound Editors
Sandy Gendler
Val Kuklowsky
Dialogue Editor
Harry Harris
Production Sound Mixer
Eric Batut
ADRMixers
Thomas J. O'Connell
Greg Stewart
ADR Recordist
Rick Canelli
Foley Mixer
Mary Jo Lange
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Rick Alexander
Jim Bolt
Andy D'Addario
Sound Effects Editors
Raoul
Mark Lapointe
John Johnson
Foley Artists
John Roesch
Hilda Hodges
Stunt Co-ordinator
Bill Ferguson

Cast
Isabel Glasser
Dr Theresa McCann
James Remar
Dr Benjamin Hendricks
Sean Haberle
Dr Julian Matar
Peter Boyle
Lieutenant McEllwaine
Malcolm McDowell
Dr Roger Stein
Charles Dence
Dr Ed Mittlebsay
Beverly Todd
Nurse Burns
Charles Bailey-Gates
Sergeant Ross
Walter Olkewicz
Dr Meade
Mother Love
Milly Putnam
Gregory West
Tommy Beaton
Juliette Jeffers
Lisa Wilson
Nancy Banks
Loreen Ridgeway
Kim Robillard
Dr Eugene Kaiser
Teryl Rothery
Officer Pierson
Joe-Norman Shaw
Detective Edwards
Don Thompson
Father, 1958
Marilyn Morry
Mother, 1958
Codie Lucas Wilbee
Older Boy, 1958
Jarrett Lennon
Young Matar, 1958
Tom Heaton
Doctor, 1958
Walter Marsh
Parking Security
Rosanne Hopkins
Mrs Rodriguez
Debbie Podowski
Dr Melissa Kyle
Larry Musser
Michael Tiernan
Anesthesiologists
C. Dale Best
Daniel Rubin
Doctors in
Operating Theatre
Akiko Morison
Operating Nurse
Rebecca Toolan
Mittlebsay's Secretary
Robin Kelly
Sandra P. Grant
ICU Nurses

Bernie Coulsen
Flower Delivery Boy
Veena Sood
Doctor in Dialysis
Frank Cassini
Intern in Dialysis
Curt Willington
Pizza Delivery Boy
Alex Diakun
County General Doctor
Ken Roberts
County General Guard
Zoltan Buday
County General
Patrol Guard
Sheelah Megill
Nurse Worley
Dee Jay Jackson
Hospital Orderly
John Destrey
Hospital
Superintendent
Andrew Wheeler
Cop in Tunnel

Matt Bennett
Young Cop
Richard Newman
Doctor in O. R.
Sydney Mentiplay
Doorman
Christy Lynne
Officer White
Walker Bonshor
Soap Opera
Television Doctor
Kendra Tucker
Soap Opera
Television Nurse

8,969 feet
100 minutes

Original Running Time
Dolby stereo
In colour
CFI
Anamorphic

The late 50s. A small boy sucks a lollipop and peeks into a doctor's surgery – to see his brother wake under the knife, struggle violently, and die. As the surgeon informs the parents, the small boy puts the lollipop in his dead brother's hand...

In the present day, Dr Theresa McCann witnesses a surgical demonstration, on a baboon, of Dr Roger Stein's 'abdominal implant', which eliminates the need for kidney dialysis. The baboon suddenly dies. She complains to Dr Ed Mittlebsay, the hospital administrator, but is fobbed off. One of Stein's patients goes into acute renal failure, and McCann puts her back on routine dialysis. Someone then poisons the patient. McCann finds a lollipop left on a table. Mittlebsay suspends her for interfering with Stein's treatment.

McCann and toxicologist Dr Benjamin Hendricks return to investigate. As they creep around, Stein is murdered. The mystery poisoner attacks McCann, but is knocked out, escapes, and is knocked down by a police car. Mittlebsay and McCann explain to Lieutenant McEllwaine that the intruder was Julian Matar, a former doctor whose unorthodox methods got him suspended, who then threw himself out of a window. How did he recover? Mittlebsay tells McCann that her suspension was a ruse.

Matar escapes, damaging his hand, and miraculously heals it with an injection. Hendricks pronounces Matar's thesis on pituitary extracts for miracle healing to be the madness of genius. Matar returns to their hospital, murdering patients and extracting pituitaries for his serum. While the police search, Matar injects himself, 'dies' and revives, all injuries cured. Mittlebsay confronts him, but is killed and 'extracted'. After a chase, Matar is gunned down but is eventually reborn to kill Hendricks before McCann finally finishes him off.

After two barely-intriguing but workmanlike efforts *The Mighty Quinn* (1989) and *Knight Moves* (1992), Carl Schenkel continues to make his way as a Hollywood thriller director, here via the current vogue in hospital theatrics exemplified by the television series *ER* and *Chicago Hope* (and our own *Medics* and *Casualty*). Part of the appeal

of these shows is the delicious fear they induce in audiences. Potentially terrifying surgical scenes do occur in *Exquisite Tenderness*, but Schenkel's direction just can't cut it and they'll please few.

The opening flashback, in black and white during a thunderstorm, promises a Coen Brothers stylisation never usefully returned to. The first 'twist' is a surprise death, but a stupid one, and so badly handled the film can't recover. We've been set up for *Coma* (albeit a gory remake), but we're landed with a chase-monster-with-guns deal – nor is it the monster we wanted. Actually, we're irritated long before this disappointment becomes apparent, because the 'twist' requires a 'police interrogation' that's a 'lulu' of wordy redirection and leaden exposition. Charles Dance's wobbly American accent renders every word he says unintentionally suspect and after Mittlebsay's justification of McCann's suspension, we may spend the rest of the evening waiting for the wrong dead doctor to come back to life.

Less suspect than baffling is McCann's motivation; subsequent revelations make little sense of her early behaviour. If these also are 'twists', they surprised no one more than the scriptwriter. Meanwhile Sean Haberle, shambling and roaring through his screen debut, saddled with booming fright-music and endless lit-from-below in-the-face cam, is the most one-note monster in recent memory, a role with a backstory so shaky other characters have to keep re-explaining it.

A piffling and tactless attempt is made to raise issues about the ethics of life-saving research, including glancing reference to Nazi doctors and their experimentation. No one – director, writers, medical advisers – seems actually to have noticed that, lunatic murders to one side, this hospital is rife with criminally unprofessional incompetence. Usefully for *mise en scène*, if not hygiene, it has a labyrinthine, deserted, Drippy-and-Slimy Wing, with shimmying miles of ducts, but they're just wasted – as is Peter Boyle and the long prepared-for electric jolt-pad scene. The use of black and/or fat characters as expendable slapstick-comedy figures is a horrible throwback.

Counted down, in the style of spoof reviewer Joe Bob Briggs, it might just sound promising: one breast-shot with candles, one in-pool naked frolic, one baboon-spasm, one hideously swollen body seizure, one strangling-in-chains, one bitten-off thumb, one sewn-up mouth, several syringe-stabbings to the head, plus – for scenery buffs – many swoony background views of Vancouver's bayside and thrilling skyline. Plausibility and coherence mightn't be missed if the script were witty, or the shocks, scares and monster effective, or if there were any sustained stylistic pleasures to counter the many throw-away disappointments. Malcolm McDowell's sexy-ugly eyebrow-muggery is unsubtle fun at best, but despite high billing he's soon gone. Thereafter, nothing helps us care how things end.

Mark Sinker

Farinelli Il Castrato

Italy/Belgium 1994

Director: Gérard Corbiau

Certificate

15

Distributor

Guilid

Production Companies

Stephan Films/Alinea Films/Le Studio Canal
+JUGC Images/France 2 Cinema/Studio Images/
K2 Productions/
RTL/TV1/MG srl/Italian International Film srl
With assistance from the
Gouvernement de la
Communauté Française
de Belgique
With the participation of
Canal +/Filmstiftung
Nordrhein Westfalen
GmbH/Centre National de
la Cinématographie le
soutien de la procirep
Supported by funds
from Eurimages du
conseil de l'Europe
Developed with the aid
of the European Script
Fund An initiative of the
MEDIA programme of
the European Union

Executive Producers

Linda Guttenberg

Aldo Lado

Alinea Films:

Dominique Janne

Stephane Thenoz

Producer

Vera Belmont

Production Co-ordinator

Belgium:

Nadine Borreman

Production Managers

Germany:

Léonard Gmur

Spain:

José Maria Rodrigue

Assistant Directors

François Enginger

Jean-Claude Ventura

Fernando Pacheco

Casting

Gérard Moulevrier

José Villaverde

Screenplay

Andree Corbiau

Based on the original

screenplay by

Andree Corbiau

Gerard Corbiau

Adaptation

Marcel Beaulieu

Andree Corbiau

Gerard Corbiau

Synopsis Collaboration

Teff Erhat

Michel Fessler

Dialogue

Andree Corbiau

Continuity

Patrick Aubree

Director of Photography

Walther Vanden Ende

Camera Operator

Yves Vandermeeren

Editor

Joelle Hache

Production Designer

Gianni Quaranta

Costume Design

Olga Berlutti

Anne de Laugardiere

Farinelli's Shoes

Berlutti Bottier

Make-up/Hair

Special Effects

Kuno Schlegelmilch

Make-up Supervisor

Paul le Marinel

Hair Supervisor

Fabienne Bressan

Wigs

Wig Creations

Music Director

Christophe Rousset

Music Performed by

Contre-tenor:

Derek Lee Ragin

Soprano:

Ewa Mallas-Godlowska

Music Consultants

Marc David

David Miller

Music Extracts

"Qual guerriero in campo

armato", "Ombra fedele

anch'io" from Idaspe;

"Son qual nave

ch'agitata" from

"Artaserse" by J. A. Hasse;

"Se al labbro mio non

credi" by Riccardo

Broschi; "De Torrente"

from "Dixit Dominus";

"Cara sposa", "Lascia ch'io

pianga" from "Rinaldo"

by George Friedrich

Handel; "Generoso

risuegliati o core" from

"Cleofide" by Johann-

Adolf Hasse; "Salve

Regina" by Giovanni

Battista Pergolesi; "Alto

Giove" from "Polifemo"

by Nicole Porpora; "Chant

trompette" by Melani et

Scarlatti, performed by

Margarida Natividade,

Francoise Renson, Pierre

de Boeck, Luc Capouillez

Sound

Jean-Paul Mugal

Sound Design

Richard Schorr

Digital Sound Editor

Fabien Krzyzanowski

Sound Editor

Catherine O'Sullivan

Sound Recordist

Laurent Boudaud

Sound Mixer

Dominique Hennequin

Music Recordist/Editor

Jean-Claude Gaberel

Post-synchronization

Michel Filippi

Isabelle Filippi

Post-synchro Recording

Gilles Missir

Sound Effects

Julien Naudin

Equestrian Stunts

Mario Luraschi

Harnessing

Carlos Moens

Cast

Stéfano Dionisi

Farinelli/Carlo Broschi

Enrico Lo Verso

Riccardo Broschi

Elsa Zylberstein

Alexandra

Caroline Cellier

Margaret Hunter

Marianne Basler

Countess Mauer

Jacques Boudet

Philip V

Graham Valentine

The Prince of Wales

Pier Paolo Capponi

The Father

Delphine Zentout

The Young Admirer

Omero Antonutti

Porpora

Jeroen Krabbe

Renald du Peloux de

Saint Romain

Richard Reeves

Jonathan Fox

Josef Betzing

Karl-Heinz Dickman

Stefan Mazel

Wolfgang Grindemann

Hubert Burczek

Harald Gotz

Andreas Ulich

Alfonso Asenjo

9,961 feet

111 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

Madrid, 1740. Farinelli, the most celebrated singer in Europe, is staying at the court of King Philip V of Spain. It has been three years since he retired and parted from his brother and collaborator Riccardo. Now he lives in seclusion with his lover Alexandra.

Farinelli was castrated at the age of ten, allegedly after a fall from a horse. The angelic voice of his childhood has thus been preserved, and he makes even Riccardo's weak compositions sound good. His debut takes place in a public square in Naples in 1722, when he trounces a virtuoso trumpet player in an impromptu musical contest. The crowd ecstatically chants his name, and a legend is born.

Handel, the official composer of the English court, hears of Farinelli, and invites him to sing before the King. But he pointedly excludes Riccardo, and a bitter argument ensues in which Farinelli spits in Handel's face. The singer's fame increases. Farinelli's voice has a magical power over women; and he and Riccardo accomplish their seductions in tandem, with the castrato providing the foreplay and the elder brother finishing the job.

While Farinelli is on tour in 1734, Handel calls on him backstage and proposes again that he sing at Covent Garden. Confused by the offer, Farinelli is struck dumb on stage. Later in his dressing room, he waits for Handel, but is visited instead by a beautiful young woman, Alexandra Leyris. She begs him to follow her to London to save the Nobles Theatre from ruin at the hands of its more popular competitor – the royal opera house, run by Handel. As the Nobles is currently managed by Porpora, Farinelli's old teacher, he and Riccardo agree to go.

In London, Farinelli begins a passionate affair with Alexandra, supported in the usual way by Riccardo. At the Nobles, Farinelli defends Handel as a genius against his legion of detractors; but the composer spurns his friendly overtures. At the same time, Farinelli expresses doubts about the quality of his brother's music. Deeply hurt, Riccardo dissolves the partnership.

Alexandra has stolen the manuscript of Handel's new score, and Farinelli determines to perform it. Seeking revenge, Handel finds the crestfallen Riccardo hiding in his attic, and wheedles out of him the fact that it was Riccardo himself who castrated the young singer for their . Handel tells Farinelli what he knows; but Farinelli goes out and sings magnificently at the première. Crushed, Handel swears he will never compose another opera.

Farinelli's tranquil self-exile at the Spanish court is disturbed by the arrival of his brother, hoping to make amends. Riccardo slashes his wrists, but soon recovers. One last time, the two carry out their fraternal pact, and Riccardo leaves, having restored in some measure what he took away: Alexandra is pregnant.

Farinelli Il Castrato has a garbled modernist structure involving shock cuts and bewildering shifts in

time and it features a fair amount of casually kinky sex. But, really, this melodramatic embroidery on the life of the legendary eighteenth-century singer belongs to the pure old Hollywood of such biopics as *A Song to Remember*, with sleek, sinister George Sand (Merle Oberon) flashing her eyes and instructing beefy Chopin (Cornel Wilde) to stop "that so-called Polonaise jumble you've been playing for days." In this case the historical heavy is Handel, who crushes a beetle remorselessly under his thick phallic cane and means to do the same to the high-strung castrato he sneers at as a "fairground attraction" and a "singing machine".

There's also the terrible secret Riccardo bears about the truth behind his brother Farinelli's bogus accident; and in general, one can understand the old-fashioned temptation to treat a singer's backstage life as grand opera (with select Freudian trimmings). At least on the level of romantic kitsch, the movie ought to be fun, and so it is, intermittently – as when Handel, skulking in the flies of the theatre, drops a threatening note down to Farinelli in mid-performance, then swoons when the castrato proceeds to trill more heroically than ever. This opulent production exhibits a lot of swooning, since it's the purple conceit of the writer-director Gérard Corbiau (who had a previous operatic turn with *The Music Teacher* [Le Maître de musique] in 1988) that Farinelli's sustained high notes induce 'musical orgasms' among the flushed ladies in the stalls.

But Farinelli barely tweaks the cultural and psychological possibilities of its marvellous subject. There is a loose implication that the singer's androgynous, quasi-occult voice – here suitably 'morphed' from the separate efforts of a soprano and a counter-tenor – represents the eruption of Dionysus in the measured Apollonian world of the classical. The irony is that the god is also less than a man; and one may impute

Oedipal rivalry to Farinelli's vocal triumphs without, however, being especially supported by the script.

Perhaps, then, the castration is a broad metaphor for the privations faced by any romantically driven, non-conforming artist? Apparently not, as Farinelli turns out to be a bit of a stud who, it is true, can't plant the seed, but nonetheless ploughs the field satisfactorily beforehand. Now it's quite plausible that a eunuch might need to prove his maleness; but the repeated scenes of energetic thrusting suggest rather an attempt to make Farinelli appear as 'normal' as his circumstances allow (he certainly keeps his mitts off Riccardo in their threesomes together). And there's something equally glib in the way our hero – who gets mobbed by groupies wherever he goes – is tipped as the first of the polymorphous superstars, a sort of Bowie or Prince *avant la lettre*. This, too, makes it easier on the audience and mitigates the strangeness and cruelty of the tale.

Stefano Dionisi's pouty, brooding attitudes and his ornate get-ups – half Visigoth, half Las Vegas showgirl – have, however, been wittily worked out; and indeed, the delights on offer are mainly pictorial. The movie seems intended to horn in on the *Amadeus* and *Farewell, My Concubine* trade, but it misses the arch metaphysical duelling of the former and the historical density of the latter. You learn astonishingly little of the mixed social, economic and religious motives behind the *castrati* as an institution; but you obtain some first-class views of candelabra and periwigs. Even as fruity melodrama, *Farinelli* fails – ruined by the chaotic continuity, which churns up crises (such as a tremor the singer develops in his upper octaves), then forgets all about them. When at long last one reaches the big primal scene, it has no impact, since it's already obvious by then that the movie has no balls.

Peter Matthews



Trills, spills and high anxiety: Stéfano Dionisi

French Kiss

USA 1995

Director: Lawrence Kasdan

Certificate

12

Distributor

PolyGram Filmed
Entertainment
Production Company
20th Century
Fox/PolyGram Filmed
Entertainment present
A Working Title
production
In association with
Prufrock Pictures
Executive Producer
Charles Okun

Producers

Tim Bevan
Eric Fellner
Meg Ryan
Kathryn F. Galan
Associate Producer
Liza Chasin

Production Supervisor

Suzanne Wiesenfeld

Production Co-ordinator

Blanche Wiesenfeld

Unit Production Managers

Charles Okun
Patrick Gordon
2nd Unit:
Olivier Thon
Location Manager
Oliver Lhoste
Pierre Gralhon

Post-production Supervisor

Michael Tinger

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Laura Brownson

Assistant Directors

Charles Okun
Michel Cheyko
Fanny Aubrespin
Christopher Gachet
Script Supervisor
Dominique Piat
Casting
French:
Françoise Combadiere
USA:

Jennifer Schull

Associate:

Phil Poulas

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

Screenplay

Adam Brooks

Director of Photography

Owen Roizman

Camera Operators

Rob Hahn

2nd unit:

Marc Koninckx

Steadicam Operators

Nicola Pecorini

2nd Unit:

Marc Koninckx

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Brad Kuehn

Associate Producer:

Michele C. Vallillo

Digital Compositing Artists

Tom Smith

Carol Ashley

Digital Artist

Derek Spears

Editor

Joe Hutshing

Production Designer

Jon Hutman

Art Director

Gerard Viard

Set Decorator

Kara Lindstrom

Set Dresser

Gerard James

Special Effects

Gilbert Pieri

Costume Design

Joanna Johnston

Wardrobe Supervisor

Germinal Rangel

Make-up

Lutz Wesemann

Paul Le Marinel

Hairstylists

Sally Ann Herschberger

Lolita Avellanais

Titles

Pittard/Sullivan/

Fitzgerald

Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

James Newton Howard

Harmonica Solos

Performed by

Toots Thielemans

Music Conductor

Artie Kane

Orchestrations

James Newton Howard

Brad Dechter

Music Producer

Michael Mason

Music Supervisor

Peter Afterman

Music Editor

Jim Weidman

Music Consultant

Danny Benair

Songs

"Les Yeux de ton père"

by Mathieu Crespin,

Jean-Marie Paulus, Noel

Rota, Stephane Mellino,

and Matthieu Paulus,

performed by Les

Negresses Vertes;

"Via con me" by and

performed by Paolo

Conte; "I Love Paris" by

Cole Porter, performed

by Toots Thielemans;

"Flambee

Montalbanaise" by Guy

Viseur, performed by

Gus Viseur et son

orchestre; "C'est trop

beau" by Raymond

Vincy, performed by

Tino Rossi; "Assedic"

by Eric Loutis dit

Toulis, performed by

Les Escrocs; "Verlaine"

by Paul Verlaine,

Charles Trenet,

performed by Charles

Trenet; "Les Yeux

Ouverts" (French

adaptation of "Dream

a Little Dream of Me",

by F. Andree, W.

Schwandt, G. Kahn,

adaptation by Brice

Homs, Korin Ternov-

zeff, performed by

Beautiful South, "La Vie

en rose" by Edith Piaf,

Lougy, Mack David,

performed by Louis

Armstrong; "La Mer"

by Charles Trenet,

performed by Kevin

Kline; "Someone Like

You" by and performed

by Van Morrison

Supervising Sound Editors

Robert Grieve

Stu Bernstein

Digital Editors

Stewart Nelsen

David Giammarco

Mark Gordon

Karen Wilson

Ulrika Akander

ADR Supervisor

Jessica Gallavan

Foley Supervisor

John Murray

ADR Editors

Cindy Marty

Mary Andrews

Laura Graham

Foley Editors

Julie Feiner

Bob O'Brien

Production Sound Mixer

John Pritchett

Music Mixer

Dennis Sands

Music Recordist

David Marquette

ADRMixer

Charleen Richards

ADR Recordist

Randy Piotroski

Foley Mixer

Jim Ashwill

Foley Recordist

Nerses Gezalyan

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Chris Carpenter

D. M. Hemphill

Bill W. Benton

Sound Effects Editors

Joan Giammarco

Steve Mann

Mark A. Lanza

Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

Gary Hecker

French Dialogue Consultant

Serge Grunberg

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jean-Louis Airola

Cast

Meg Ryan

Kate

Kevin Kline

Luc

Timothy Hutton

Charlie

Jean Reno

Jean-Paul

François Cluzet

Bob

Susan Anbeh

Juliette

Renée Humphrey

Lilly

Michael Riley

Campbell

Laurent Spielvogel

Concierge

Victor Garrivier

Octave

Elizabeth Commelin

Claire

Julie Leibowitch

Olivia

Miquel Brown

Sergeant Patton

Louise Deschamps

Jean-Paul's Girl

Olivier Curdy

Jean-Paul's Boy

Claudio Todeschini

Antoine

Jerry Harte

Herb

Thomazine Heiner

Mom

Joanna Pavlis

Monotonous Voiced

Woman

Florence Soyoz

Flight Attendant

Barbara Schulz

Pouting Girl

Clement Sibony

Pouting Boy

Adam Brooks

Perfect Passenger

Marianne Anska

Philippe Garnier

Frédéric Therisod

Cops

Patrice Juiff

French Customs

Official

Jean Corso

Desk Clerk

François Xavier Tilmant

Hotel Waiter

William Diols

Beach Waiter

Mike Johns

Lucien

Marie Christine Adam

Juliette's Mother

Jean-Paul Jaupart

Juliette's Father

Fausto Costantino

Beefy Doorman

Jean-Claude Braquet

Stolen Moto Owner

Dominique Regnier

Attractive Passport

Woman

Ghislaine Juilliot

Jean-Paul's Wife

Inge Offerman

Nicholas Hawtrey

Wolfgang Pissors

Nikola Obermann

German Family

Alain Frerot

Old Man

Dorothee Picard

Mrs Cowen

JeanAllain

Mr Cowen

9,996 feet

111 minutes

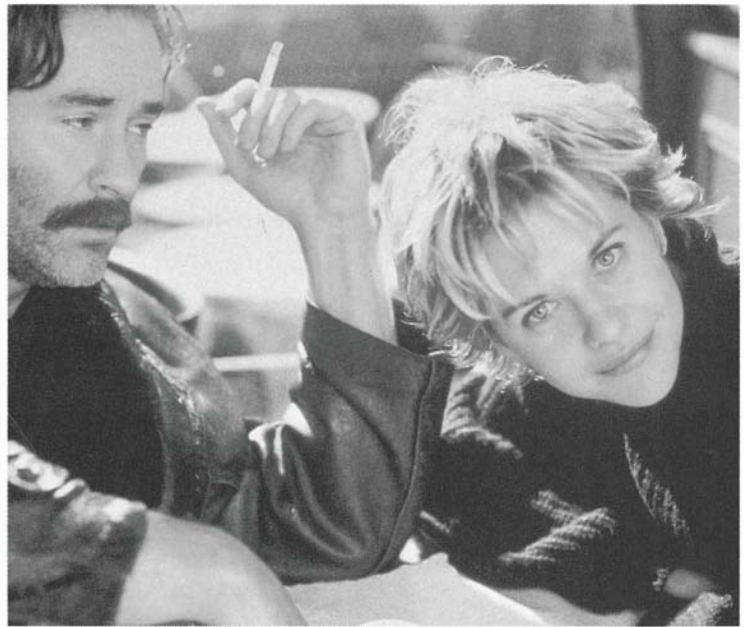
Dolby stereo

In colour

Deluxe

Anamorphic

Partially Subtitled



They really know how to kook: Kevin Kline, Meg Ryan

Juliette, but both are unsatisfied.

Kate returns the necklace to Jean-Paul and, pretending to have sold it, gives Luc her life's savings and leaves. When Luc discovers what she has done – and that she has rejected Charlie – he pursues her and asks her to stay with him. Sometime later, they kiss in his new vineyard.

After Billy Crystal in *Forget Paris*, it is now Meg Ryan's turn with *French Kiss* to discover true love and unpasteurised cheese in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower. Both films can be seen as variants of *When Harry Met Sally*, the film that made these actors into household names. Here, as Kate and Luc, Ryan and Kevin Kline follow the Harry/Sally route from incompatibility and vague dislike to noble

La Haine

France 1995

Director: Mathieu Kassovitz

Certificate

tbc

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Les Productions

Lazennec

A co-production with

Le Studio Canal +/La

Sept Cinema/Kaso inc

Productions

With the le concours

des Sofica/Cofimage

6/Studio Images/

With the participation

of Canal +

Producer

Christophe Rossignon

Line Producer

Gilles Sacuto

Associate Producers

Adeline Lecallier

Alain Rocca

Production Manager

Gilles Sacuto

Unit Production Manager

Sophie Quideville

Location Manager

Abdelnabi Krouchi

Post-production Supervisor

Sylvie Randonneix

Assistant Directors

Eric Pujol

Ludovic Bernard

Casting

Jean-Claude Flamand

Screenplay

Mathieu Kassovitz

Continuity

Nathalie Vierny

Director of Photography

Pierre Aim

Camera Operator

Georges Diane

Steadicam Operator

Jacques Monge

Video Documentary

Armelle Bayle

Editors

Mathieu Kassovitz

Scott Stevenson

Art Director

Giuseppe Ponturo

Special Effects

Pierre Foury

Costume Design

Virginie Montel

Make-up

Sophie Benaiche

Songs/Music Extracts

"Burnin' and Lootin'"

by and performed by

Bob Marley; "That

Loving Feeling" by Tony

Joe White, performed

by Isaac Hayes; "More

Bounce to the Ounce"

by Roger Troutman,

performed by Zapp and

Roger; "Mon esprit part

en couille" by Woody

and Expression Derek,

performed by

Expression Derek; "DJ

Skud Interlude" by and

performed by Cut

Killer; "Wedding Songs

Medley" by Etan

Massuri; "Funk Funk"

by Larry Blackmon,

performed by Cameo;

"Tak Hedat" by and

performed by Tak Fari

Nas; "Outstanding" by

and performed by The

Gap Band; "Loufou

Lakari" by and

performed by Marsala

and Lonningisa"; "The

Beat Goes On" by Burks,

Carter, Lee, Sherrer,

Smith, performed

by Ripple; "Nsangu

Nsangu" by and

performed by Klay M;

"Ellens, Gesang III (Ave

Maria" by Schubert,

performed by Christa

Ludwig and Irwin Cage;

"Hard Core" by and

performed by Solo;

"Groove Holmes",

"Ricky's Theme" by

M. Diamond, A. Yauch,

A. Horowitz, M. Nishita,

E. Bobo, performed

by The Beastie Boys;

"Eugene's Lament"

by M. Diamond,

A. Yauch, A. Horowitz,

M. Nishita, performed

by The Beastie Boys;

music from the cartoon

series "The Smurfs" by

W. Hanna, J. Barbera,

H. J. Curtin; music

from the TV series

"Chapi Chapi" by

F. de Roubaix

Sound/Sound Design

Vincent Tulli

Sound Mixer

Dominique Dalmasso

Sound Recordist

Bruno Cottance

Valérie Trouette

Sound Re-recordists

Patrice Severac

Frederic Mays

Sound Effects

Nicolas Becker

Stunt Co-ordinator

Philippe Guegan

Cast

Vincent Cassel

Vinz

Hubert Kounde

Hubert

Saïd Taghmaoui

Saïd

Karim Belkhadra

Samir

Edouard Montoute

Darty

François Levantal

Astérix

Solo

Santo

Marc Duret

Inspector "Notre

Dame"

Héloïse Rauth

Sarah

Rycka Wajsbrot

Vinz's Grandmother

Tadek Lokcinski

Monsieur Toillettes

Choukri Gabteni

Saïd's Brother

Nabil Ben Mhamed

Boy Blague

Félicité Wouassi

Hubert's Mother

Fatou Thioune

Hubert's Sister

Zinedine Soualem

Bernie Bonvoisin

Cyril Ancelin

Plain-clothes Police

Patrick Medioni

CRS Cave

Julie Mauduech

Karin Viard

Gallery Girls

Benoît Magimel

Benoît

Médard Niang

Médard

Arash Mansour

Arash

Abdel-Moula Boujdouni

Young Businessman

Mathilde Vitry

Journalist

Christian Moro

CRS TV Journalist

Jibi

Fat Youth

ThangLong

Grocer

Cut Killer

DJ

Sabrina Mouicha

Saïd's Sister

Sandor Weltmann

Vinz Lookalike

Peter Kassovitz

Gallery Patron

Vincent London

"Really" Drunk Man

Mathieu Kassovitz

Young Skinhead

Anthony Souter

Florent Lavandeira

Teddy Marques

Samir Kheif

Skins

Virginie Montel

SDF Métro

AbdelAhmed Chlii

Abdel

Joseph Momo

Ordinary Guy

Olga Abrego

Vinz's Aunt

Laurent Labasse

Cook

André Damant

Concierge

Marcel Marondo

Bouncer

Eric Pujol

Assistant Policeman

Philippe Nahon

Police Chief

Sébastien Tavel

François Toumarkine

José-Philippe Dalmat

Hospital Police

Christophe Rossignon

Taxi Driver

tbcfeet

tbc minutes

Dolby Digital

Black and white

Subtitles

A public housing estate in Paris has been shaken by rioting for 24 hours because of injuries suffered by Abdel, a youth from the estate, while in police custody. Vinz, Hubert and Saïd, three local friends, have all been involved. Hubert, a would-be boxer, discovers his training area has been wrecked. Vinz tells the others that he has the pistol lost by a policeman during the rioting and that he intends to avenge Abdel's injuries if he dies. The boys go to Paris to visit a dealer, known as Astérix, who owes them money.

Vinz endangers the deal by provoking Astérix with his gun. Leaving hurriedly, Hubert and Saïd are grabbed by the police, while Vinz gets away. Hubert and Saïd get a brutal going-over at the police station. They are released and miss their train back to the suburbs, but meet Vinz again the station. The trio walk around the city and unsuccessfully attempt to steal a car. They sleep in a shopping mall and wake to a news broadcast informing them that Abdel is dead. Hubert and Saïd restrain Vinz from threatening a traffic warden. Angry with Vinz, the other two leave him but they are attacked by FN skinheads. Vinz arrives and threatens the skinheads with the pistol and all but one flees. Vinz threatens to shoot the remaining skin but can't manage to pull the trigger.

At the entrance to Hubert's block, Vinz hands Hubert the gun and asks him to get rid of it. A car draws up and a plain-clothes policeman gets out. Vinz and the cop tussle and the cop's gun goes off, shooting Vinz in the head. Hubert advances on the cop, and they face each other with guns drawn. Saïd looks on in horror as gunfire is heard.

It's the French phrase for "Fuck the Police" ("nique le police") that reverberates throughout *La Haine*, provocatively stating where the film stands in its account of the aftermath of a riot in a Parisian cité (suburban housing estate). Having represented France at Cannes this year, where Kassovitz took the Best Director prize, *La Haine* went on to do excellent business and garner unanimous praise from French critics. Released in early June, the film became a media event of such proportions that its director eventually went into hiding, sensationalist press coverage and dubious political manoeuvrings by the extreme-right

Front National combining to cast *La Haine* as a celluloid incendiary device. Not bad for a film with a medium-sized budget of FF15 million that, as its director described it, "has no stars in it, is about the housing projects and is shot in black and white". Already being pushed as a Parisian *Boyz N the Hood*, *La Haine* is an angry, adrenaline-fuelled film; its poster image of Vinz's thousand-yard stare neatly summing up its combination of in-your-face bravado with the resentful glare of one on the outside looking in.

In an interview with *Positif*, Kassovitz explained that his film was provoked by the death in police custody of a young *banlieusard*: "What I wanted to do was tell the story of a guy who gets up in the morning and by the evening has got himself killed." So, *La Haine* unfolds over a troubled 24 hours, an uneasy morning-after calm having settled on the estate where Vinz, Saïd and Hubert live. As media-vultures and riot police infest the estate awaiting reactions to news of Abdel, it emerges that a police weapon, lost during the rioting, is in Vinz's hands and the gun becomes the film's dramatic motor. Kassovitz observes the growing tension from within the trio, and the film's depiction of the group's cluster-bomb dynamics is its strongest point, aided no doubt by the fact that both Vincent Cassel and Hubert Koundé acted in *Métisse*, Kassovitz's debut. Saïd, a fast-talking, Tacchini-wearing young *beur* and Hubert, an impassive, introspective African who channels his aggression through his boxing skills, are constantly restraining Vinz, the loose cannon who threatens to go off in all their faces. The film's rhythm is their rhythm, edgy and wired, its camera's restless mobility giving the sense that wherever the group comes to rest they'll be moved on or banged up.

Scorsese's *Mean Streets* and Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* clearly serve as Kassovitz's models, but *La Haine* is more than simply a capable reworking of its American models. Just as French rap artists like MC Solaar and Les Sages poètes de la rue understand rap to be a musical space where *verlan* (backslang) can collide with Verlaine to comment on the specifics of French street life, so Kasso-



Cité boy: Hubert Koundé

vitz pays a similar attention to the 'prose combat' (the title of one of Solaar's recordings) of his characters' speech. This element of the film, along with its pseudo-documentary stylisation, delivers an authentic sense of detail that more than fleshes out the recognisably generic frame. *La Haine* also avoids the potential pitfall of becoming an over-extended promo for French rap stars by minimising the use of music – with the exception of a virtuoso helicopter shot over the estate as a local DJ blasts its towers with a mix of 'nique la police' and Piaff's 'Je ne regrette rien' – and concentrating instead on a dense stereo-mix of ambient sound.

The lengthy central section in which the trio travel into Paris is a speed-fuelled picaresque that becomes increasingly nightmarish. "*Le monde est à vous*" (the world belongs to you) runs the slogan on a Parisian advertising hoarding which they alter to read "*est à nous*" (to us), and when one of the trio tries the old routine of switching off the Tour Eiffel lights by clicking his fingers (as first seen in Leos Carax's *Mauvais Sang*), it remains stubbornly illuminated. The point being made – by a sideways swipe at the mythologised city of Carax's films – is that Paris emphatically does not belong to them. This is Paris as a bleak assault course culminating in the trauma of Hubert and Saïd's harrowing police interrogation: effectively staged with the cop's inquisitorial thuggery played off against the boys' mixed emotions of braggadocio and vulnerability as an ashamed rookie cop looks on.

The French commentary on *La Haine* has tended to overlook one of the best of its pioneering predecessors, Mehdi Charef's *La thé au harem d'archimède* (1985), a film that dealt with generational divides within *beur* families in the housing projects. Charef's film also focused on a trio of young males but, unlike Kassovitz's, delineated their environment through their relationships with their families and women. In *La Haine* women are either mothers or sisters, except when the boys attempt to pick up a group of young female sophisticates at a Parisian art gallery but find themselves so out of their depth that they react violently and offensively. The only serious relationship that Vinz, Hubert and Saïd share, apart from with each other, seems to be with the police. This is a minor criticism of a film that brings such a searing portrait of urban despair to the screen, joking nihilistically right up to its final Mexican stand-off. Kassovitz's take on his trio does seek to be inclusive, at least within its masculine perspective – Saïd's an Arab, Vinz Jewish and Hubert black African – while avoiding vacuous Benetton-style, one-world tokenism. Although *La Haine* ends bleakly, it doesn't set out to provide a liberal overview, opting instead to go with what Kassovitz feels he knows about best. It's a mark of his assurance and skill as a director that he manages to avoid over-indulging his sympathies for the trio.

Chris Darke

Haunted

United Kingdom/USA 1995

Director: Lewis Gilbert

Certificate
15
Distributor
Entertainment Film Distributors
Production Company
A Double "A" Pictures/American Zoetrope Production For Lumiere Pictures
Executive Producers
Francis Ford Coppola
Fred Fuchs
Jeff Kleeman
Ralph Kemp
Producer
Anthony Andrews
Lewis Gilbert
Co-producer
William P. Cartledge
Production Co-ordinator
Marilys Morgan
Production Manager
Ian Hickinbotham
Location Manager
Derek Harrington
2nd Unit Director
Bob Kellet
Assistant Directors
Tim Lewis
John Duthie
Stephen Cranny
Casting
Joyce Nettles
US:
Phyllis Hoffman
Screenplay
Tim Prager
Lewis Gilbert
Bob Kellet
Based on the novel by James Herbert
Script Supervisor
Ann Edwards
Director of Photography
Tony Pierce Roberts
2nd Unit Cameraman
Don Lord
Digital Effects Director
Robert Duncan
Digital Effects Producer
Drew Jones
Digital Lab Supervisor
Phil Campbell
Editor
Johnny Jympson
Production Designers
John Fenner
Brian Ackland-Snow
Art Director
Gary Tomkins
Set Decorator
Elderly Lady
Peter James
Storyboard Artist
Bill Stallion
Special Effects Supervisor
Peter Hutchinson
Special Effects
David Brighton
Nick Middleton
Costume Design
Jane Robinson
Candy Patterson
Make-up/Hair
Christine Beveridge
Wardrobe Master
Alan Flynn
Titles/Opticals
General Screen Enterprises
Music
Debbie Wiseman
Music Editor
Dina Eaton
Songs/Music Extracts
"But Not For Me" by George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin; "Happy Birthday To You" by Mildred Hill, Patty S. Hill
Choreography
Pam Davis
Sound Editor
Jonathan Bates
Dialogue Editor
Ghris Lloyd
Sound Recordist
Ken Weston
Dubbing Mixers
Gerry Humphreys
Dean Humphreys
Music Recording Mixer
Roz Colls
Stunt Co-ordinators
Marc Boyle
Sy Hollands
Cast
Aidan Quinn
David Ash
Kate Beckinsale
Christina Mariell
Anthony Andrews
Robert Mariell
John Gielgud
Dr. Doyle
Anna Massey
Nanny Tess Webb
Alex Lowe
Simon Mariell
Geraldine Somerville
Kate
Victoria Shalet
Juliet Ash
Peter England
Young David
Liz Smith
Old Gypsy Woman
Linda Bassett
Madame Brontski
Alice Douglas
Clare
Hilary Mason
Elderly Lady
Edmund Moriarty
Liam
Emily Hamilton
Mary
9,668 feet
107 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour



Spooky touch: Aidan Quinn, Kate Beckinsale

with Robert, who obsessively paints nude portraits of his sister, and suspects Simon is faking a haunting as a practical joke. David notes manifestations he comes to believe are of Mrs Mariell, a suicide, and also glimpses a figure who resembles the dead Juliet. Caught up in weeds that aren't there, David nearly drowns in a pond and experiences a fire in the cellars which also turns out not to have happened. He and Christina begin an affair, but then Juliet's ghost leads David to a churchyard where he finds the graves of Robert, Simon and Christina. Miss Webb admits Mrs Mariell was driven to suicide by her incestuous children and that she set a fire which killed the unnatural siblings. The ghosts, who have been tormenting their murderess, kill Miss Webb. Christina summons up a fire, hoping to kill David so he will join her, but Juliet leads her brother to safety. David returns to Camberley, still stalked by Christina's ghost.

James Herbert, like Jeffrey Archer, has conquered British best-seller lists without making much of a dent on the cinema, although there are forgotten video-only versions of *The Rats* and *The Survivor* from Canada and Australia, and Carlo Carlei has recently made *Fluke* in the US. *Haunted*, once a script for an unmade BBC series pilot, is the first of Herbert's novels to be filmed on his home turf. However, an American star and some involvement by American Zoetrope make it an international co-production in the spirit of those 50s Hammer quota quickies in which Robert Preston or Paul Henreid mingle with all-Brit supporting casts in country house sets.

The book (sequelled recently in *The Ghosts of Sleath*) has a present-day setting, which makes it odd that its protagonist takes so long to notice that the Mariells are living in the 20s. Putting the action back nearer the time of the ghosts' deaths plays better: if the novel seems old-fashioned, the film has a pleasant retro feel, with puffing trains and rickety cars. Most of the cast – especially John Gielgud as a doctorly spook and Anna Massey as the terrorised nanny – hark back to a style of horror not much seen in the cinema of late.

The plot is not the book's or the film's strongest suit, conflating the frame of *Don't Look Now* (cueing a micro cameo at a seance from Hilary Mason,

one of Nicolas Roeg's psychic hags) with the ancient story of the traveller who stays at a house that later turns out to have burned down years ago (dramatised in *Return to Glennascaul*). There are enough spooky touches to set up the revelation that several of the major characters are ghosts and that their home is really a burned out ruin. But it's hard to swallow when we have seen David enjoying the comforts of a house that isn't inhabitable or Miss Webb serving meals to dead people. The phenomena David experiences are too concrete and intricate to be credible as a haunting, and furthermore they need Gielgud's Dr Doyle (who puts it all down to David's Second World War traumas) and the ghostly sister to explain them at awkward length.

Veteran director Lewis Gilbert takes care to scatter scares throughout, most effectively a scene never explained as a dream or an actual experience in which the boy David hovers over his sister's coffin and Juliet stirs, simply and potentially gasping for breath and opening her eyes. Subsequently, the audience is treated to an infernal puff of flame from a dysfunctional gas light, several too many jolts as people jump out at David to tease him, a miniature whirlwind that leads our hero into the pond and more elementary fire tricks. Aidan Quinn shoulders most of the picture by underplaying his reactions and doing his very best not to appear as thick as the script would have him.

Kate Beckinsale makes a sexy flapper/spook although, like Anthony Andrews (originally set to play the hero) and Simon Lowe, she finds it easier to play the eerie set-up (a raucous birthday party for the terrified nanny) than the prosaic pay-off (black clothes and evil leers). There is a stuffiness to the morality represented by the film's disapproval of the Mariell siblings' aristo decadence. Incest is the awful secret at the heart of it all, with no more explanation needed than Miss Webb's "you were born bad," though the film's valuing of the cruel but chaste Juliet (introduced bouncing stones off her brother's head) over the longing and sensual Christina suggests the real crime is not misdirected sexuality but any kind of sexuality. Meanwhile, poor old Simon, the gadabout joker, apparently deserves death simply because he was drunk at the time.

Kim Newman

Kaspar Hauser (Verbrechen am Seelenleben eines Menschen)

Germany 1993

Director: Peter Sehr

Certificate
18
Distributor
Arrow Films
Production Companies
Multimedia München
For Bayerischer Rundfunk
In co-operation with WDR/ORF/SVT/ARTE/Telepool/The Bayerischen Filmförderung der Landesanstalt für Aufbau/rderung (LFA), München
Producer
Andreas Meyer
Production Managers
Olga Mach
Ivan Helel
Job Title
Susanne Schlaepfer
Post-production
Rainer Mockert
Assistant Directors
Eva Kadankov
Jan Zähumensky
Jan Mensik
Casting
Sabine Schroth
Screenplay
Peter Sehr
Continuity
Dolores Glanert
Director of Photography
Gernot Roll
Editors
Heidi Handorf
Susanne Hartmann
Art Directors
O. Jochen Schmidt
Karel Vacek
Special Effects
Heinz Ludwig
Costume Design
Diemut Remy
Make-up
Helga Sander
Mia Schöpke
Music
Nikos Mamangakis
Sound
Hamo Hayder
Sound Editors
Alexander Saal
Friederike Treitz
Sound Mixer
Rainer Carben
Dubbing Editor
Magda Hafemickel
Dubbing
Magda Hafemickel
Cast
André Eisermann
Kaspar Hauser
Udo Samel
Tutor Daumer
Jeremy Clyde
Lord Stanhope
Katharina Thalbach
Gräfin Hochberg
Cécile Paoli
Stéfanie von Baden
Hansa Czypionka
Hennenhof
Hermann Beyer
Anselm Ritter
von Feuerbach
Dieter Mann
Baron Wedel
Johannes Silberschneider
Tutor Meyer
Peter Lohmeyer
Leopold von Baden
Tilo Nest
Carl von Baden
Dieter Laser
Ludwig I. von Bayern
Owe Döbsenkecht
Ludwig von Baden
Anja Schiller
Sophie von Baden
Gerd Lohmeyer
Blochmann
Franz Baumgartner
"Mann"
Valérie Vail
Dalbonne
Jan Skvar
Kaspar as a boy
Oldrich Vlach
Bürgermeister Binder
Jennifer Chamberlain
Eleonore
Ladislav Kremer
Zentner
Oldrich Slavik
Medizinalrat
Eva Zábelská
Mother Daumer
Jiff Schmitzer
Anton
Jan Kehär
Polizeisoldat
Milan Vágner
Vorsteher
Appellationsgericht
Barbara Lukesov
Josephine
Václav Mares
Von Beerstett
Oldrich Bartik
Dana Bartunková
Katerina Brozová
Milan Charvat
Jaroslav Durek
Alice Dvorakova
Milan Findejs
Karel Habi
Stanislav Hajek
Karel Hlusicka
Karel Huraib
Gabriela Jeskova
Josef Jurasek
Lucie Novakova
Václav Kozilbraska
Jan Kucera
Václav Legner
Jiri Lir
Petra Mastalirova
Svatopluk Matyas
Jan Moravec
Jan Nemejovsky
Lucie Novakova
Hana Packertova
Rudolf Pechan
Milan Rieth
Ladislav Samlot
Petr Skarke
Lubomira Sonkova
Zdenek Srstka
Milan Vachalec
Marketa Voborilova
Jaromir Bartunek
Vitezslav Bouchner
Zdenek Cernin
Jiri Ded
Marcela Durrova
Barbara Francova
Jan Grygar
Roman Hajek
Zdena Herfortova
Milan Horsky
Anna Jelinkova
Antonin Julinek
Jiri Jurka
Václav Kotva
Dr Tmil Krizek
Petra Laznickova
Zdenek Lhotak
Alois Liskutin
Zoja Matulikova
Václav Maurer
Martin Moravec
Jan Novak
Gustav Oplustil

Zora Pavlovskova
Jan Pohan
Bretislav Rychlík
Josef Seveg
Jan Slovák
Oldřich Šrajr
Josef Stefl
Bohumil Vavra
Dr. Václav Vodač
František Vondráček
Václav Vydra

Vladislav Wimmer
Gustav Vondráček
Miroslav Vylet
František Zachárník

12,482 feet
139 minutes

Original Running Time
Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

Karlsruhe, 1812. A son, Kaspar, is born to Stephanie, Frenchborn wife of Crown Prince Karl, heir to the throne of Baden. Karl's brother Ludwig plots with his mistress, Countess Hochberg, and diplomat Major Hennenhofer to substitute a sickly baby for Kaspar. The changeling duly dies while Kaspar is secreted in the country with a nurse, Madame Dalbonne. But Hochberg intends her son Leopold to succeed, and uses her knowledge of Kaspar's whereabouts to blackmail Ludwig into staying single.

On Karl's death, Ludwig becomes Grand Duke, taking an aggressive attitude to a long-standing territorial dispute with Bavaria. Hochberg decides to have Kaspar removed to Hungary, but quarrels with Dalbonne who retaliates by taking the child to Munich and selling him to Baron Redel, chief minister of Bavaria. Redel, seeing the boy as a potential weapon against Baden, sends him to a remote castle where he is kept tethered for 12 years in a dark cellar. In 1828, on Redel's orders, Kaspar is released in Nuremberg, unable to speak and scarcely able to walk.

The phenomenon of this helpless adolescent arouses international interest, and Kaspar is entrusted to Professor Daumer, who studies him and teaches him speech. His case also attracts the great jurist, Court President von Feuerbach, who visits Kaspar and urges him to write down all he can remember of his early years. Ludwig, realising who the youth must be, sends an emissary to kill him, but the attempt fails and Kaspar is given a bodyguard. Hennenhofer is demoted and called to account, but threatens to reveal the whole conspiracy if he stands trial.

Ludwig dies and is succeeded by Leopold, who is willing to cede Bavaria's case. But his wife Sophie, of sterner stuff, sends a travelling Englishman, Lord Stanhope, to seduce Kaspar with luxury and fine clothes. Dazzled, Kaspar comes to despise Daumer and quits his household. Feuerbach, seeing Stanhope as a potential ally, confides his belief that Kaspar is the lost heir to the throne of Baden. Stanhope reports back to Sophie, who meets secretly with Redel and strikes a deal. On Redel's orders, Feuerbach is poisoned. Kaspar sinks into despair and puts up no resistance when the assassin returns and stabs him to death.

Werner Herzog's film, *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (1974), carried the German title *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* ("Each for himself and God against all"). Nearly 20 years later, Peter Sehr's version of the story also bears a supple-

mentary title: roughly translated, "Crimes against the inner life of a human being." Which effectively sums up the difference between the two films. Herzog sees the youth chiefly as a symbol of the human condition: like most of his protagonists, Kaspar is an alienated being at odds with society. Sehr is less concerned with existential concepts than with the historical context. What fascinates him are the labyrinthine political intrigues of the period.

So different is Sehr's perspective that his film can't be seen as a remake of Herzog's. Even so, comparisons between the two films are revealing. Herzog, in a riposte to Truffaut's *L'enfant sauvage*, treats the education of Kaspar as a betrayal, a corruption of his natural innocence by 'civilised' hypocrisies. For Sehr, the boy (a bright and affectionate child before his incarceration) has been cheated of a normal upbringing – an upbringing which, apart from anything else, might have equipped him to deal with the treacherous world in which he finds himself. "I thought you were different," says Daumer, sadly, when his protegee, under Stanhope's influence, first tells a lie. "But I want to be like all the others," retorts Kaspar. Innocence, in Sehr's film, is an affliction: Kaspar is as entitled to the ability to deceive as to any other survival skill.

The drawback of Sehr's approach is that it requires a heap of historical exposition, and anyone unfamiliar with the petty feuds of nineteenth-century German statelets may well find themselves losing track. (It doesn't help that for most of the film the rulers of Baden and Bavaria are both called Ludwig.) Though much of what we're shown is conjecture – that Kaspar was really the scion of the Badener ruling house has yet to be proved – motivations don't always add up: quite why Bavaria would first want the child reduced to idiocy, and then released to wander free, remains obscure.

Still, Sehr makes evocative use of his palatial settings, a rank mix of opulence and degeneracy like the stench of piss on silk sheets. Indeed bodily functions, or disfunctions, figure largely, with the Grand Duke's mistress taunting him with his political and sexual ineptitude – "You always did have a limp dick at the crucial moment" – and the disgraced Hennenhofer coolly emptying a bedpan over his ducal employer's head. Even the decent, humane Daumer busily instructs his charge in the analysis of faeces, a skill that Andre Eisermann's Kaspar (a docile, vulnerable creature with none of the clenched twitchiness of Herzog's Bruno S.) takes to with uncritical delight. From a strong supporting cast, Jeremy Clyde stands out as the most perfidious Englishman abroad since Brando in Gillo Pontecorvo's *Queimada!*. Sehr's film may lack the tortured intensity of Herzog's, but substitutes a slow-burning indignation of its own. And for a debut feature it's a strikingly assured achievement.

Philip Kemp

The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin

United Kingdom/France/Italy/Czech Republic/Russia 1994

Director: Jiri Menzel

Certificate

15

Distributor

Portobello Pictures
Production Company
Portobello Pictures
In association with
MK2/Canal+/La Sept
Cinéma/the
CNC/Channel Four/The
European Co-Production
Fund/
Fandango/Domenico
Procacci/Cable Plus –
K.F.E.F.A.-Studio
89/Studio Trité

Producer

Eric Abraham
Co-producer
Katya Krausova
Associate Producer
Russia:
Leonid Vereshchagin
Production Executives
Véronique Cayla
Christine Ravet
Production Associate
Daniela Jencikova
London:
Vanessa Lees

Production Co-ordinators

Pavel Pita
Russia:
Evgenii Sokolov
London:
Nicky Monina
Joanna Human
Post-production Supervisor
Oldrich Mach
Post-production Co-ordinator
Michael Prikryl
Associate Director
Jan Schmidt

Assistant Directors

Václav Hnat
Marketa Valkova
Jan Maxa
Casting
Tamara Odintsova
Prague:
Sedma s.r.o.

Screenplay

Zdenek Sverak
Vladimir Voinovich
Screenplay Consultant
Jan Gogola
Based on the novel by
Vladimir Voinovich
Continuity
Helena Matsukova
Director of Photography
Jaromir Sofr
Camera Operator
Josef Cernusak

Editors

Jiri Brozek
Paris:
Elisabeth Guido
Production Designer
Milan Bycek
Set Decorator
Bohumil Kadlec
Special Effects
Jiri Berger

Costume Design

Irina Ginno
London Consultant:
Anne Sinclair
Make-up
Frantisek Cizek
Titles/Opticals
General Screen
Enterprises
Music
Jiri Sust
Music Director
Jiri Zobac
Sound
Jiri Moudry
Military Consultant
Václav Kabat
Stunt Co-ordinator
Ladislav Lahoda

Cast

Gennadiy Nazarov
Ivan Chonkin
Zoya Buryak
Nyura
Vladimir Ilyin
Golubev
Valeriy Dubrov
Kilin

Alexei Zharkov
Gladyshev
Yuriy Dubrov
Voikov
Sergei Stepanchenko
Butch
Sergei Garmash
Miliaga
Zinovii Gerd
Stalin
Marian Labuda
Opalikov
Maria Vinogradova
Granny Dunia
Tatiana Gorbachevskaia
Afrodita
Liubov Rudneva
Kapa
Ivan Ryzhov
Shapkin
Viacheslav Molokov
General Drynov
Nikolai Marchenko
Borisov
Tatiana Agafanova
Ninka
Tatiana Oshurkova
Taika
Galina Petrova
Zinaida
Henrik Bista
Zhikin
Aleksandr Ilyin
Shikalov
Aleksandr Kuzmichev
Taldykin
Sergei Batalov
Kurzov
Igor Fokin
Lukov
Irina Lazareva
Raisa

Aleksandr Mokhov
Meleshko
Olga Anokhina
Liushka
Aleksandr Masalov
Malakhov
Josef Balecky
Doctor
Aleksandr Garin
Svintsov
Sergei Gabrielian
Prokopov
Igor Vetrov
Bukashev
Vadim Zavialov
Lapshin
Vadim Ljubishin
Strykh
Oleg Demidov
Filiukov
Mikhail Vaskov
Zavgorodnyi
Aleksandr Pashkovsky
Peskov
Vladimir Gorishin
Iartsev
Valerii Nikolaev
Balashov
Valerii Iaremenko
Samushkin
Evgenii Sokolov
Konstantin Chepurin
Telephonists
Nastia Degteva
Girl

9,953 feet
111 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Subtitles

Soviet Army Private Chonkin is sent to a remote village named Red End to guard a crashed plane until a colonel arrives to relieve him. His attention is drawn to Nyura, the village postmistress, and soon the two of them strike up a lustily consummated romance. The village is part of a collective farm run by Golubev, an amiable incompetent. Golubev is worried that Chonkin has been sent to spy on the collective farm and is disturbed when he sees a letter to Opalikov, Chonkin's superior, on Nyura's table. To write it, the virtually illiterate Chonkin enlisted the help of Gladyshev, the village's intellectual, a self-taught scientist obsessed with the hybridisation of disparate species and the consumption of excreta. Nyura and Chonkin's relationship provokes jealousy and a letter is written to the region's secret police headquarters. Meanwhile, ►



The changing of the guard: Gennadiy Nazarov

◀ Chonkin's romance with Nyura has been clouded by gossip. The announcement of the commencement of war with Germany causes a run on the village's only shop. When Gladyshev discovers that Nyura's cow has devoured his experimental plants, he fires off a letter denouncing Chonkin.

Encountering secret policeman Milyaga and his men, Golubev passes out but Chonkin and Nyura resist arrest and, with Nyura behind the aircraft's guns, take them prisoner in their cellar. An hysterical call between Golubev and regional headquarters is seized upon by the collective farm's chairman, who vastly exaggerates the nature of the village's resistance. A battalion is diverted, who arrive in time to capture the fleeing Milyaga, whom they take for a German spy. Nyura's cottage is blown up. Chonkin survives and is hastily decorated by the General, whom Chonkin believes to be the colonel meant to relieve him. As the true story becomes clear, Nyura and Chonkin take off and escape in the miraculously restored plane.

● *The Life and Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* is a project with a long and complicated history. In the screenplay first written in 1965, Vladimir Voinovich's original idea was to follow his protagonist through the war from the early 40s to finding himself in a labour camp in 1956. When Mosfilm failed to take up any of the six versions attempted, Voinovich started writing the story as a novel, part of which was published in the magazine *Grani* ("Facets"). However, after cross-questioning by the Writers' Union, his work was banned. *Chonkin* circulated in the USSR in *samizdat* form until a manuscript was eventually smuggled to Paris where it was published in Russian, French and English. Stripped of his citizenship, Voinovich went into exile in 1980. His citizenship was restored ten years later.

During the 80s Eldar Ryazanov began working on a script based on the novel, giving it the working title of *Vanya and Tanya*. Portobello Pictures acquired the rights in 1986. At one point dual versions of the film were under discussion, a two-part version for the then Soviet Union, and a single feature for the West. More or less Americanised versions were also toyed with in which such stars as Mikhail Baryshnikov were mooted to play Chonkin. Jirí Menzel entered the arena after a Czech translation of the novel was made for him, and after Zdenek Svěrák, scriptwriter on several of Menzel's films, had become interested.

Menzel, like Voinovich, is a man whose career bears the marks of Soviet repression. In 1969, Menzel's *Larks on a String* was banned, making him an artistic *persona non grata*. But there are perhaps too many uncomfortable ironies for the film to have become a personal project for Menzel. In interviews, he has been keen to stress his artisanal relationship to this film as well as to film in general, and he has explained his resistance to using the

book simply to make a 'cheap joke' about the Czech Republic's Soviet years. He and Svěrák have faithfully retained the more realistic elements of the novel, right down to particular snatches of dialogue, the exact poster of Stalin in the NKVD office, and the inscription in English on the toilet door. Gone is a Bulgakovian strand of magic, the use of dreams and fantasies in which human and animal characters merge. Instead, Menzel shows us the village of Red End in all its ramshackle poverty without any Slavophile romanticism. It is more of a "Graznoe" (meaning dirty), as it is originally called in the novel, than the "Krasnoe" (red, once meaning beautiful) it is renamed as after the Revolution, a transition the subtitles translate as a shift from Dead End to Red End.

As in Menzel's earlier work, the touchstone of sanity, humour and, indeed, humanity is shown to be simple, everyday affection. The camera returns repeatedly to Nyura's embroidery-bedecked bed showing the couple in moments of post-coital repose that recall the sensual Czech cinema of the 60s. Chonkin is not the wide-eyed protagonist of *Closely Observed Trains* of course, but he is a character "observed with love" rather than one "undergoing a vivisection" in Menzel's words. Their relationship contrasts with the cold couplings of the NKVD chief and his secretary, as well as the routine of bureaucratised thuggery that is played out in his office as the day's suspects are brought in for questioning. Gladyshev, a character inspired by the scientist Lysenko whose "false genetics" dominated Soviet agriculture until the mid-60s, represents the perversion of Soviet intellectual life, while all around village gossips and malcontents are depicted grabbing the opportunities lent them by the new system.

There are chilling moments – a pan along lines of close-cropped military necks; the testimony of the little girl who tells Chonkin she loves her parents but "loves Stalin more". But there is also a sense of the absurd provoked by fear. A Jewish man triggers a panic when it is discovered that by chance his name is Stalin. The army raid turns into farce when they don white uniforms – no one was brave enough to report that the wrong cloth had been sent to them – and find they are without ammunition.

Unfortunately, the writing often seems insufficiently tight. The arrival and departure of the village Heroine of Socialist Labour, for example, counts for very little. On occasion Menzel's observations are neither fresh nor distinctive enough to carry the film decisively. Often there is only a scant sense of the village as a community; the characters are confined very much to their own worlds. Zoya Burzak however is memorable as Nyura. Perhaps the veteran director would have fared better with the reflective ironies of Voinovich's novella *The Fur Hat*, about the triumph of mediocrity within a Sovietised society.

Verina Claessner

Living In Oblivion

USA 1995

Director: Tom DiCillo

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Companies

JDI Productions

Lemon Sky Productions

Executive Producer

Hilary Gifford

Co-executive Producers

Frank Van Zerneck

Robert Sertner

Producers

Michael Griffiths

Marcus Viscidi

Co-producer

Meredith Zamsky

Associate Producers

Danielle Von Zerneck

Dermot Mulroney

Jane Gil

Production Co-ordinator

Christina Rosati

Unit Production Manager

Meredith Zamsky

Unit Manager

Cybil MacDonald

Location Manager

Thomas Whelan

Assistant Directors

Jeff Lazar

John O'Rourke

Jody Solomon

Ian Bearce

Derrick Kardos

Casting

Marcia Shulman

Screenplay

Tom DiCillo

Script Supervisors

Danna Lieber

Lisa Katcher

Director of Photography

Frank Prinzi

Editor

Camilla Toniolo

Production Designer

Thérèse DePrez

Art Directors

Scott Pask

Janine Michelle

On-Set Dresser

Betsy Alton

Costume Design

Ellen Lutter

Wedding Dress

Maria Marzilli

Wardrobe Supervisor

Jill Merritt

Hair/Make-up

Chris Laurence

Laura Tesone

Main Title Design

Michael Ventresco

Opticals

The Effects House

Music

Jim Farmer

Supervising Sound Editors

Hal Levinsohn

Eliza Paley

Sound Editors

Timothy O'Shea

Stuart Emanuel

Dialogue Editor

Jacob Ribicoff

Sound Mixer

Mathew Price

Re-recording Mixer

Dominick Tavella

Looping Editor

Kenton Jakub

Cast

Steve Buscemi

Nick Reve

Catherine Keener

Nicole Springer

Dermot Mulroney

Wolf

Danielle Von Zerneck

Wanda

James Legros

Chad Palomino

Peter Dinklage

Tito

Hilary Gifford

Script

Michael Griffiths

Sound Mixer

Matthew Grace

Boom

Robert Wightman

Gaffer

Kevin Corrigan

Assistant Camera

Tom Jarmusch

Driver/Intern

Ryan Bowker

Food Service/Clapper

Francesca DiMauro

Food Service Supervisor

Norman Field

Hair/Make-up Artist

Lori Tan Chinn

Costume Designer

Vincenzo Amelia

Cook

Laurel Thornby

Nicole's Mother

8,071 feet

90 minutes

Mono

Colour/Black and white

● In New York, director Nick Reve struggles to make a low-budget film. His lead actress, Nicole Springer, is nervous about a very difficult scene in which she confronts her mother with her feelings about traumatic events in her childhood. This is because this scene echoes one in real life that her real mother died too soon for her to play out. A complex mix of characters are at work on the shoot – among them bossy assistant director Wanda and temperamental cinematographer Wolf – and a series of mishaps frustrate them; a sound boom keeps dropping into the frame, focus is lost, a light explodes. The actresses run through their lines again to collect themselves, and achieve the perfect take with no film in the camera. A persistent beeping noise sends Nick into a tantrum. It's the noise of his alarm clock. He wakes from his nightmare.

Nicole wakes up after an ill-advised one-night-stand with her moronic leading man Chad Palomino. The next day's filming goes very badly. Palomino's macho antics distract the crew and his increasingly absurd suggestions for the big love scene plunge the whole set into chaos. When Nicole overhears him complaining about her to Nick, and boasting about their sexual liaison, she humiliates him in front of the camera and a fist-fight develops which Nick joins in with. As a battered Palomino limps off the set, Nick tells Nicole the whole film is really about her and they kiss. She wakes from her dream.

On the real set, the filming of a dream sequence becomes the stuff of nightmares. Nick's mother (who bears an uncanny resemblance to the mother actress in his dream) turns up, having escaped from her old people's home by walking through walls. The smoke machine explodes and the dwarf hired to lend a sinister quality to the dream sequence takes umbrage at his stereotypical role and marches off the set. Nick is about to throw in the towel when his mother steps into the dwarf-shaped breach and – to universal sighs of relief – a suitable dream sequence is completed.



The one-eyed man is king: James LeGros

Tom DiCillo's second feature (after 1992's widely-praised but disappointingly soulless *Johnny Suede*), *Living In Oblivion* has been a long time coming but it turns out to be richer and more entertaining than anyone had a right to expect. At first glance the subject matter looks alarmingly self-indulgent – the opening shot is a slowly looming close-up on a well-used movie camera – and how much mileage can possible be left in that old “It was only a dream” device? Quite a lot, as things turn out.

There's a whiff of self-referential flannel about the writer/director's insistence that the stuff going on behind the camera is often a lot more interesting than the stuff going on in front of it, but it only takes a few moments of *Living In Oblivion* to realise that something authentic and intriguing is going on. The grainy black and white opening segment sucks the viewer into the film-making process with consummate skill. The sequence in which Catherine Keener's performance progressively deteriorates through seven retakes is not only superbly-acted, it also invites the audience to make the kind of judgements about what constitutes a convincing characterisation that they routinely entrust to the director. The fine gradations that divide success and failure are compellingly hard to discern under this kind of intense analysis.

The opening third of *Living In Oblivion* – the director's dream sequence – was originally shot as a complete short with a view to possible expansion to full feature length. It would have been easy for the completed film to lose its way from there on in, but the characters and their inter-connecting tensions expand happily to fill the available space. The atmosphere broadens and gets progressively more comic with accrued complexity. The scenes in which Chad Palomino lets his creative juices flow with ever more ridiculous suggestions are hilarious, even without remembering that DiCillo is the man whose debut film gave the mighty talent of Brad Pitt its first significant cinematic exposure.

All the actors appear to be enjoying themselves. If Catherine Keener resents the fact that a film which was originally conceived as a showcase for her eventually becomes one for the rat-like loveability of Steve Buscemi, she does not show it. This is the second film in the last couple of years (the first was the excellent *In The Soup*) in which Buscemi has shone in the potentially irritating role of struggling film-maker. Someone somewhere has got the message, because he is currently shooting his own debut feature.

Tom DiCillo's greatest achievement here is to demystify the film-making process without robbing it of its thrill, its beauty or even, in the end, of its mystery. The man still best known as Jim Jarmusch's one-time cinematographer has given a beguilingly human face to the dreams and nightmares of American independent cinema.

Ben Thompson

Mortal Kombat

USA 1995

Director: Paul Anderson

Certificate

15

Distributor

First Independent

Production Company

New Line Cinema

presents

A Threshold

Entertainment

production

Executive Producers

Bob Engelman

Danny Simon

Producer

Lawrence Kasanoff

Executives in Charge of Production

Ted Zachary

Carla Fry

Associate Producers

Alison Savitch

Lauri Apelian

Production Executive Salon Films

Penny Kanjanapinchote

Production Associates

Susan S. Block

Joshua R. Wexler

Production Supervisor

Michele McGuire

Production Co-ordinators

Jeffrey Kiehlbauch

Martha J. Liermann

Thailand:

Suwimon "O"

Petcharayuthporn

Additional Action

Sequences:

Mary Carol Bulger

Unit Production Managers

Bob Engelman

Thailand:

Kevin Reidy

Location Managers

J. Marc Strachan

Thailand:

Gerrit Folsom

Additional Action

Sequences:

Rocky Brooks

Location Supervisor

Thongtern Mahasuwan

Executive in Charge of Post-production

Joe Fineman

Assistant Directors

Robin Oliver

Thomas Schellenberg

Jarounari Memak

Michael Scott

Greenwood

Apichart "Muek"

Chusakui

Marco Openheimer

Peter Merwin

Script Supervisors

Dea Cant

Additional Action

Sequences:

Jules Mann-Stewart

Casting

Fern Champion

Mark Paladini

Screenplay

Kevin Droney

Director of Photography

John R. Leonetti

Insert Unit Director of Photography

Christopher Faloona

Optical Camera

Jim Mann

Digital Camera

Nobuhiro Morita

Samrod Shenassa

Animation Photography

Joseph Thomas

Camera Operators

Hugo Cortina

Allen Easton

Additional Action

Sequences:

Bill Battersby

Steadicam Operator

Bruce Greene

Video Supervisor

Robert Morgenroth

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Alison Savitch

Co-ordinator:

Kim Lavery

Post-production

Supervisor:

Steven Kaminsky

Editor:

Steve R. Moore

R/Greenberg Associates

West Visual

Effects/Computer

Graphics

Supervisor:

Stuart Robertson

Creative Supervisor:

Joseph Francis

Executive Producers:

Tricia Henry Ashford

Ralph Horan

Producer:

Kendrick James

Wallace

Production Co-

ordinators:

Craig 'French Toast'

Sost

Craig A. Mumma

Editor:

J. W. Kompare

Head of Digital Post-

production:

Tara Handy Turner

CG Supervisor:

Isa Abdul-Bari Alsulp

CG/Digital Film Artists:

Charles Colladay

Christopher Walsh

Craig Clark

Jim Goodman

Mark Sorell

Lindy Wilson

Bill Konersman

Valerie Delahaye

Charlotte Francis

Arthur Jeppe

Emily Scher

Andy Rosen

Vince Dequattro

Rob Cavaleri

Rod Schumacher

Stephane Coutre

Heikyung Yoo

Seth Maury

Nancy Evans

Nancy Oppenheim

Robert Hoffman

Lewis N. Siegel

Digital Matte

Paintings/Conceptual

Art:

Michael Lloyd

Digital Film Supervisor:

Greg Kimble

Buena Vista Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Peter Montgomery

Producer:

Carolyn Soper

Production Supervisor:

Denise Davis

Editor:

Juliette Yager

Special Projects

Supervisor:

Wally Schaab

CG Supervisors:

Aaron Campbell

David Jones

CG Ghost Ship:

Lee Lanier

Digital Compositing:

Winston Quitasol

Bruce Tauscher

Digital Artwork:

Elissa Bello

Digital Co-ordinators:

Lydia Bottegoni

Kathryn Liotta

Matte Paintings:

Paul Lasaine

Allen Gonzales

CG Technical

Consultant:

Sho Igarishi

Additional Digital Effects

Todd-AO Digital Images

Additional Special

Visual Effects

Fantasy II Film Effects

Illusion Arts:

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Additional Compositing

Pacific Title Digital

Studios

Visual Effects:

The Post Group

Digital Film Group

Optical Effects

Buena Vista Imaging

Supervisor:

Mark Dornfeld

Optical Line-up:

Kevin Downey

Additional Animation Visual

Effects

Available Light

Animation

Design/Supervision:

John T. Van Vliet

Effects Producer:

Katherine Kean

Digital Supervisor:

Laurel Klick

Animators:

Bill Arance

Conann Fitzpatrick

January Nordman

Cynthia Hyland

Michel Gagne

Tanya Wilson

P. Andrew Gauvreau

Optical Printing:

Beverly Bernacki

Mona B. Howell

Effects Editor:

Dana Desselle

Additional Digital Animation

R&B Films

Editor

Martin Hunter

Production Designer

Jonathan Carlson

Additional Action Sequences

Visual Consultant

Mick Strawn

Art Directors

Jeremy A. Cassells

Additional Action

Sequences:

C. J. Strawn

Set Design

Brian Jewell

Galia Nitzan

Set Decorators

Susan L. Degus

Thailand:

Arin Pinijararak

Set Dressers

Merry-Beth Noble

George Capetanos

Rodney Petreikis

Crystal L. Sujeski

Brent Blom

Robert Smith

Art Borquez

Thomas A. Sonnek

Draughtsman

Andrew Baron

Lead Scenic Artist

Christian Klump

Storyboard Artists

Brannon Wright

Peter Ramsey

Daryl Henley

Tim Lawrence

David Hogan

Lead Sculptor

Daniel R. Engle

Additional 3D Dataset

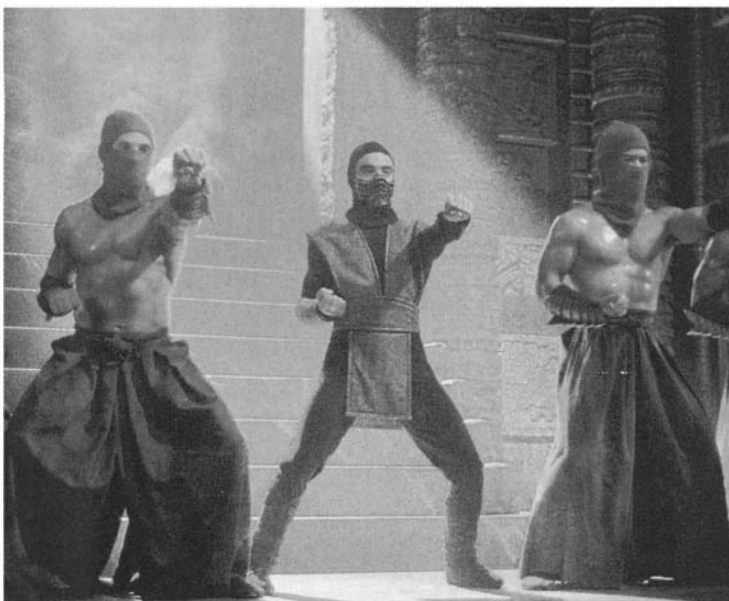
Modelling

Viewpoint

International

Additional Models/Miniatures

Grant McCune Design



Take that: the baddies from 'Mortal Kombat' strut their stuff

◀ The forces representing Outworld soon prove their lethal might, but Sonya snaps Kano's neck in combat. Cage battles and defeats Scorpion. Lu draws with Princess Kitana, who surreptitiously gives him advice on his next fight which helps him later defeat Sub Zero. Eventually, Cage beats the seemingly undefeatable Goro. Radon reveals that he knows each earth's warrior's deepest fears. Shang drags Sonya into Outworld and Cage and Lu follow. There the latter two battle monsters, but are helped by Princess Kitana. Lu challenges Shang to a final bout, and having faced his worst fears (himself, and his destiny) in the process, emerges victorious. Princess Kitana regains the rule of Outworld. Back in our world, the winners' happy reunion with Radon is cut short when the godlike Emperor emerges on the horizon.

● Many recent action films induce a sense of déjà vu. See one 'concept' and you are more than likely to see it again a few months later. Thrillers set on submarines (*Under Siege*, *The Hunt For Red October*, *Crimson Tide*), men-in-kilts films (*Rob Roy*, *Braveheart*), and a slew of comic-book based movies drop off the production line. It seems we've only just recovered from the mind-batteringly silly *Street Fighter* when *Mortal Kombat* comes forth to wrest control of the joystick. In their previous incarnations as video games, *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* were sworn foes, fighting for the forces of Nintendo and Sega respectively. Most consumers tended to agree that *Mortal Kombat*, with more blood and better animation, was the superior game. With elegant cosmic symmetry, *Street Fighter* (actually based on the game *Street Fighter II*) has proved to be the better film, if only for its delightful camp outréness and refusal to take itself too seriously.

The problem with *Mortal Kombat* is its pace. After a striking opening dream sequence in which Lu's brother has his back broken, the first 40 minutes flits peripatetically from location to location. The script presents a lot of overly-elaborate back-stories to digest, but

they go down awkwardly. When the climax comes with the *Mortal Kombat* tournament, the fights are so bland and stodgy, a feeling of cinematic dyspepsia never really dissipates. "Finish him!" exhorts Shang near the end of many of the contests, a catchphrase of the original game. "Finish it!" you feel like shouting back at the screen.

Director Paul Anderson, whose previous film was the dismal British ram-raiding teen-pic *Shopping*, overindulges in slow-motion photography, neglecting to generate a sense of speed to offset the film's many dull stretches. He lacks flair for action, so the overall impression is of watching someone playing the game badly rather than feeling as if you are in the game itself. A nightclub scene, thronged with trendy ravers, provides a nasty flashback to Anderson's previous *Shopping* trip, but there are no new goods on display. Too much energy seems to have been spent designing elaborate sets of leering gargoyles and orientalist clutter that recall Korda's *The Thief of Bagdad*. Yet, nothing spectacular ever happens. There are scenes involving boats, forests, underground taverns and sports arenas, yet everything is so darkly lit and densely decorated it looks like one location.

Several lurid monsters literally rear their ugly heads, often putting in finer performances than the 'living' players. As Radon, Christopher Lambert reprises his weary immortal act from the *Highlander* films – the lightning bolts from his eyes seem to be the only thing keeping him awake. What most of the cast and stunt people are good at is shouting, kicking, and throwing punches, which they perform admirably. The real stars of this film are the Foley artists, who produce the wonderfully realistic sounds of bones breaking and flesh being pummelled. With so many action films coming out these days, all so heavily reliant on these sound effects, one hopes these noble technicians are reaping the financial benefits. They ought to get a share of the grosses.

Leslie Felperin

Nightwatch

Denmark 1994

Director: Ole Bornedal

Certificate

18

Distributor

Metro Tartan
Production Companies
Thura Film/DR TV
Fikton/Danske
Filminstitut
Executive Producer
Jesper Boas Smith

Producer

Michael Obel
Production Manager
Jens Arnoldus
Assistant Director
Peter Flinth
Screenplay
Ole Bornedal
Script Supervisor
Karen Bentzon
Director of Photography
Dan Lausten

Camera Operator

Søren Berthelin

Steadicam Operator

Jacob Bonfils

Optical Effects

Peter Jerris

Graphics

Peter Skriver

Editor

Camilla Skousen

Art Director

Søren Krag Sørensen

Special Effects

Kim Olsson

Costume Design

Margrethe Rasmussen

Make-up

Kim Olsson

Music

Joachim Holbek

Music Performed by

City of Prague
Philharmonic

Music Conductor

Mario Klemens

Songs

"Let Your Fingers Do the Walking", "Dog Star Man", "Popcorn" performed by Sort Sol; "Can't Cry No More" performed by The Sandmen

Sound

Michael Dela

Nino Jacobsen

Sound Recordist

Juraj Durovic

Sound Re-recordists

Martin Schmidt

John Struck

Sound Effects

Julien Naudin

Cast

Nikolai Coster Waldau

Martin Bork

Sofie Grabøl

Kalinka Martins

Kim Bodnia

Jens Arniel

Lotte Andersen

Lotte

Ulf Pigaard

Inspector Peter

Wörmer

Rikke Louise Andersson

Joyce

Stig Hoffmeyer

Rolf Ericksson

Gyrd Lofquist

Old Nightwatchman

Niels Anders Thörn

Jytte Rosholm

Doctors

Leif Adolfsson

Theatre Director

Henrik Flig

Actor

Jesper Hyldegaard

Bar Patron

Ulrik Thomsen

Chris Friis

Michel Castenholt

Thugs

Peter Hygaard

Bartender

Karin Morbaek

University Woman

Michael Goeckjaer

Lecturer on Law

Mikael Heilman

Dead Woman

9,626 feet

107 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

● Law student Martin Bork takes a job as a night security guard in a mortuary. On his first night, the retiring nightwatch guard shows him the routine. The guard mentions a predecessor who was dismissed for necrophiliac activities.

The next day, Martin's best friend Jens Arniel – engaged to Lotte, a trainee church minister – confesses he has been seeing a prostitute, Joyce, and using Martin's name. Wanting to resist the slide into adult conformity, Jens proposes a pact to Martin: each of them will risk whatever the other dares him to do. Martin has Jens stand up to two fascist thugs in a bar. At the morgue, Police Inspector Wörmer brings in the latest victim of a serial killer who likes scalping. Later, Jens pulls a prank on Martin and challenges him to join him at dinner with Joyce. In the restaurant, Jens is very aggressive with Joyce.

The next night at work, Martin finds bloody footprints and a mislaid corpse but by the time the duty doctor and Wörmer arrive, the corpse has been returned and the footprints removed. Joyce finds Martin's girlfriend Kalinka

and asks her to make Martin stop abusing her. Martin confesses to meeting her but denies the abuse. Kalinka goes to work with Martin and they make love against the cadaver room wall. Next day, Martin is accused of assaulting a corpse and the police find sperm traces in the room. Martin tells Wörmer he suspects Jens.

Kalinka visits Joyce's apartment only to find her dead. Joyce's killer is cleaning up in the bathroom. Kalinka slips away without seeing that the killer is Wörmer. She and Jens half-convince police investigator Ericksson that Martin is being framed. Meanwhile, Martin finds out his necrophiliac predecessor was Wörmer.

Wörmer forces Martin to attack him with a baseball bat. Kalinka sees Martin hit Wörmer and flees with the policeman, but he then threatens her with a scalpel. Wörmer ties Martin and Kalinka up and when the others arrive, he kills Ericksson. Having handcuffed Jens to a pipe, he prepares to scalp Kalinka. Jens escapes and shoots Wörmer. Later, at a joint wedding ceremony, Martin jokingly dares Jens to say "no" at the altar. He does, but only because the priest has named Kalinka instead of Lotte as his bride.

● So claustrophobic and detail-driven is Ole Bornedal's debut feature *Nightwatch* that a clamour of portents is rung in just one key scene. While showing Martin Bork around his unenviable new night job, the old morgue guard drops enough jaundiced hints to fuel the suspicions of the most obtuse of innocents. While padding down the echoey corridors, he asks Martin if he knows why the old man is retiring, but when Martin shakes his head, he doesn't elucidate. In the long room where the cadavers are laid out in rows, alarm cords dangle above them, in case they should revive, something which the guard says "never happens". Nevertheless he warns Martin to leave the door open as there's no handle on the inside, and advises him to focus on the key chain hanging from the ceiling when he walks down the row, never looking to the right or left.

He mentions "the scandal" involving a former night guard some years ago, a necrophiliac who used the corpses as "his very own harem". In his office there's a large red alarm light, a baseball bat and a copy of Alexander Gardner's haunting 1865 photograph of the condemned prisoner Lewis Payne, executed for the attempted assassination of the American Secretary of State. The guard keeps insisting that Martin must bring a radio and tells him that he will get bad breath in a short while because "it comes with the territory". To survive just this walk-through, you feel, Martin must really need this job.

Bornedal continues to work on audience unease with every incident. As if working nights in a charnel house isn't enough, Martin also has a best friend bent on discomfiting his life with a mutual dare pact. Jens' challenges are supposed to ward off the inevitable domesticity of marriage. Narratively,

they keep the adrenaline level high and his macho ethos gives a near-plausible motive for Martin to endure his grueling job. Having bested some fascist bar thugs with a dose of their own bigotry (in the subtitles, he calls them "Pakis"), Jens quotes Nietzsche's best-known line: "that which does not kill us makes us stronger." It is obvious that, for Jens, marrying Lotte means some kind of death.

And it is he, not Martin, who bests Wörmer in the climactic struggle, proving how much of a Nietzschean 'superman' he is by cutting off his own finger to escape the handcuffs and save the day. Most of the time, however, he is a suspect. His verbal abuse of the prostitute, Joyce, gives spice to the general feeling that something extremely nasty is in the air. Kim Bodnia gives a nicely ambivalent performance as Jens: his harsh treatment of Joyce is never really explained, and there remains a question mark over his final commitment to Lotte, despite the joke ending.

By contrast, Martin remains a crop-headed introspective zombie who looks fresh from military service. He is happy to force the pace in the dare game, but reluctant to match either Jens' *chutzpah* or his casual misogyny in public. He keeps his own clear ambivalence about women to himself. That his girlfriend Kalinka happens to be playing a corpse in a production of *Mephisto* might be a metaphor for her apparent inability to truly experience life as these boys do. In another film, it could also be one portent of doom too many for credibility to bear but there's barely a trace of stagey unreality about this otherwise supremely ghoulish film.

To call *Nightwatch* a medium-budget, Chabrolesque chiller with a creepy line in atmospherics is to understate its intelligence and power in playing on a general unease between the sexes. Someone in Hollywood may be tempted to remake it on a big scale but tight, televisual, close-up shooting is ideal for this material – the mortuary rooms make their presence felt in the periphery of the frame. The horror of the place is nicely registered in the sickly countenance of Nikolaj Waldau as Martin, generating a downbeat counterpoint to the stark terror of Wörmer's victims. Bornedal uses a light touch and an icy grip by turns. Strong playing and crisp editing make his *Nightwatch* a small gem of genre film-making.

Nick James



Bad breath: Nikolaj Waldau, Sofie Graabøel

The Postman (Il Postino)

Italy/France 1994

Director: Michael Radford

Certificate

U

Distributor

Buena Vista International

Production Company

Cecchi Gori group/Tiger Cinematographica/Pentaflm Esterno/Mediterraneo Film A co-production with Blue Dahlia Productions/Le Studio Canal +

Executive Producer

Albert Passone

Producers

Mario Cecchi Gori Vittorio Cecchi Gori Gaetano Daniele

Production Supervisor

Vincenzo Testa

Production Manager

Raffaele Veneruso

Assistant Directors

Gaia Corrini Stefano Veneruso

Screenplay

Anna Pavignano Michael Radford Furio Scarpelli Giacomo Scarpelli Massimo Troisi

Story

Furio Scarpelli Giacomo Scarpelli Based on the novel "Il postino di Neruda" by Antonio Skarmeta

Continuity

Elide Cortesi

Director of Photography

Franco di Giacomo

Camera Operator

Stefano Coletta

Editor

Roberto Perpignani

Production Designer

Lorenzo Baraldi

Costume Design

Gianna Gissi

Make-up

Alfredo Marazzi

Simone Marazzi

Léone Noël

Hair stylist

Ferdinando Merolla

Titles/Opticals

Videogamma

Music

Luis Enrique Bacalov

Music Performed by

Sinfonietta di Roma

Accordion:

Hector Ulises Passarella

Violin soloist/

Mandolin:

Riccardo Pellegrino

Music Conductor

Luis Bacalov

Music Recordists

Franco Finetti

Fabio Venturi

Sound Supervisor

Alessandra Perpignani

Sound

Massimo Loffredi

Sound Editor

Ezio Marcorin

Sound Mixer

Angelo Raguseo

Dubbing Supervisor

Rodolfo Bianchi

Sound Effects

Paolo Amici

Tullio Arcangeli

Giulio d'Angeli

Saverio Lancia

Ezio Marcorin

Daniele Masini

Augusto Penna

Roberto Sterbini

Spanish Language Consultant

Antonio Arevalo

Cast

Massimo Troisi

Mario

Philippe Noiret

Pablo Neruda

Maria Grazia Cucinotta

Beatrice

Linda Moretti

Rosa

Renato Scarpa

Telegraph Operator

Anna Bonaiuto

Matilde

Mariano Rigillo

Di Cosimo

Bruno Alessandro

Pablo Neruda's Voice

Sergio Solli

Carlo di Maio

Nando Meri

Vincenzo di Sauro

Orazio Stracuzzi

Alfredo Cozzolino

9,738 feet

108 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Eastman

Subtitles

1952. Mario, the unemployed son of an Italian fisherman, learns from a cinema newsreel that the exiled Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, is to take up residence on their island. Impressed by the number of women mobbing the poet's train, he secures the job of Neruda's personal postman, though his boss is more interested in Neruda's reputation as Communist 'poet of the people'. Daily, Mario brings piles of letters and parcels to the villa where Neruda lives with his wife, Matilde. He reads the poet's verse, and gradually incites Neruda to talk to him about poetry, in particular about the workings of metaphor. Neruda, too, warms to Mario's natural perceptiveness. Mario begins to wonder if he too is a poet.

In the local bar, Mario is smitten by the beautiful Beatrice, the owner's

niece, and tries to enlist Neruda as scribe of his passion. Neruda refuses, but gives him a book "for his metaphors," which he signs in front of the girl. Metaphor works its spell on her, too, and she falls for Mario. Neruda is witness at their wedding, but at the reception he announces that he can now return to Chile. The men part affectionately, and Neruda promises to write, but time passes. The Christian Democrats win a landslide election victory, and then rescind their local promise to supply running water. Mario, radicalised by his experience, votes Communist, and insists that his future son will be named Pablito.

Eventually, a formal letter from Neruda's secretary requests the forwarding of items from the villa. Mario's family take this as evidence that he was exploited by the poet, but Mario insists that it was he alone who gained from their encounter. Fulfilling an earlier promise, he makes a tape of the sounds of the island for Neruda. Ten years later, Neruda and Matilde return to the island and meet the child, Pablito. His widowed mother explains that Mario never saw his son. He was killed at a Communist demonstration at which he was to read his workman's poetry. She plays the tape, 'Canto per Pablo Neruda', and Neruda is last seen pensively walking the island's beach.

Michael Radford apparently wanted to cast Massimo Troisi in the lead role in his first feature, *Another Time Another Place*, but it was not until ten years later that the two worked together on *The Postman*, a sort of reversed reworking of the concerns of the earlier film. In *Another Time Another Place*, Italian prisoners of war brought passion and experience to the repressed, marginal community of north-east Scotland; here it is the Italian who is the marginal figure, waiting to be ignited by poetry and Pablo Neruda. Troisi, who initiated the project, is central to the film's effect – he is scarcely off-screen, and at the beginning his combination of nuanced gesture and vocal hesitancy is compulsive; he does not so much play as inhabit the role of Mario. Philippe Noiret gives a more conventional performance as Neruda, and the contrast in acting styles serves as an effective register of contrasting experience and sensibility.

Most of the film is devoted to the repeated encounters between the two men, however, and all the actors' skill cannot prevent a certain narrative lethargy. The central early plot motif, the islanders' fear of the contagion of 'metaphor' spreading through them, produces amusing moments, as they each use metaphor to express their unease, but Mario's sudden insight that maybe the whole world is a metaphor is left undeveloped. Instead, the film abandons poetry for a lazily predictable tale of Mediterranean backwardness, stocked with cliché characters – local fishermen, smouldering dark beauty (called Beatrice to invoke the poetry of Dante), black-clad widow, seedy politician, anti-Communist local



Pat poetics: Massimo Troisi

priest implying that Neruda may have eaten his own children – and helped along with sentimental detail. Despite Troisi and three other Italians being credited, with Radford, for the screenplay, this is fake Italy, Italy for export. It is particularly ludicrous that Neruda should be required to school the Italian peasant, a man in his thirties, not just in poetry, but in love. In the original novel, set on an island off the Chilean coast, the hero was a 17-year-old boy. The exiling of the novel to Italy, and the need to cast Troisi, has exacted a heavy cost in credibility, a cost that extends to Neruda, who remains slightly perfunctory, with his tangos, his smug refusal to discuss his poetry, and his fretting about the Nobel Prize (which he was not to win until 19 years later). Neruda turns into another lovably curmudgeonly oldster, melting and transmitting his knowledge and artistic passion to a neophyte, a variant of Noiret's role in a similarly glutinous vision of Mediterranean life, Tornatore's *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*.

Eventually, the film seems to realise the absurdity of its vision, as Mario admits to himself that his curiosity and his naïve questions can have been little more than a diversion for Neruda, and that his ideas about his own poetic gift are a delusion. This belated attack of intellectual rigour is welcome, and produces the most original and persuasive scenes in the film, but it is sadly short-lived, as the film-makers succumb once more to 'heart-warming' cliché, making their hero a martyred worker poet, whose doe-eyed son can avenge his abandonment by leading Neruda to his rueful final stroll.

The Postman is well served by its actors, and does contain amusing details – watching the newsreel at the start, the villagers are far less impressed by the grand foreign poet than by the shots of themselves and their island. But its fundamental falsity and miscalculations are ever more evident, miscalculations encapsulated in a banal and intrusive musical score by Luis Enrique Bacalov.

Julian Gaffay

Shanghai Triad

Hong Kong 1995

Director: Zhang Yimou

Certificate

15

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Company

Shanghai Film Studio/Alpha Films/UGC-Images/La Sept Cinéma

With the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Executive Producers

Zhu Yonde Wang Wei

Producer

Jean-Louis Piel

Production Executives

Shanghai Film Studio: Wu Yigong UGC-Images:

Yves Marmion

Production Managers

Zhang Jianmin

Hu Xiaofeng

Zhang Zhenyan

Post-production Supervisors

Tokyo:

Gao Xiulan

Wang Min

Assistant Directors

Yang Xiaodan

Nie Chunsheng

Yan Changsheng

Véronique Demaret

Screenplay

Bi Feiyu

Freely adapted from *Men Gui (Gang Law)* by Li Xiao

Literary Adviser

Wang Bin

Director of Photography

L. Yue

Steadicam Operator

Peter Rosenfeld

Editor

Du Yuan

Production Designer

Cao Jiuping

Art Directors

Huang Xinming

Ma Yongming

Pyrotechnics

Chen Pengyun

Costume Design

Tong Huamiao

Make-up

Mi Zide

Yang Yu

Music

Zhang Guangtian

Music Performed by

Pipa Soloist:

Zhang Qiang

Double Clarinet Soloist:

Yuan Xiaogang

Singer:

Gong Li

Chorus:

Yinhe Youth Television

Art Ensemble

Choreography

Wang Qing

Sound Design

Tao Jin

Sound Effects

Qian Shouyi

Western Dress Consultant

Anne Brault

Cast

Gong Li

Bijou [Xiao Jinbao]

Li Baotian

Tang, the gang boss

Wang Xiaoxiao

Shuisheng, the boy

Li Xuejian

6th Uncle

Sun Chun

Song, Tang's No. 2

Fu Biao

Tang's No. 3

Chen Shu

Shi Ye

Liu Jiang

Fat Yu

Jiang Baoying

Cuihua, the Widow

Yang Qianquan

Ah Jiao

Gao Ying

Gao Weiming

Lian Shuliang

Wang Ya'nan

Zhang Yayun

Guo Hao

Zheng Jiasen

Ni Zengshao

An King

Jia Shijun

Jiang Jiankang

Yu Jiangang

Li Dou

9.684 feet

108 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles



Chorus of disapproval: Gong Li

Ah Jiao. Anyone leaving or arriving on the island without the Boss' consent is to be killed. Fifth Day: Bijou goes to visit Cuihua and spies her secret lover. Sixth day: Bijou sees Cuihua's lover lying dead in the water. She lashes out at the Boss, who blames her for telling him what she saw. Later she and Cuihua talk till dawn. Then Bijou gives Shuisheng three coins for his future.

Seventh day: the Boss, comments that Ah Jiao looks like Bijou when she was a girl. He tells everyone that Song is arriving that afternoon. Shuisheng overhears men plotting to kill Bijou on behalf of Song. The boy rushes to tell the Boss and finds him with Bijou and Song. The Boss announces that he is aware of this plot, and that Song has been lured to the island. He and Bijou are to be executed. She pleads for Cuihua and Ah Jiao to be spared, but learns that Cuihua is already dead, and Ah Jiao is to be trained up as Bijou's replacement. The Boss believes that Bijou told Cuihua about what had been going on. Eighth day. The Boss returns to Shanghai with Ah Jiao and Shuisheng, who is hung up on the boat mast for trying to protect his mistress.

● "Have you never seen blood?" asks Bijou of her *ingénue* servant Shuisheng, after he fails to find her red outfit. It's a resonant line in *Shanghai Triad*, a film about finding the horrific in an opulent world in which much is stained crimson. As he did with *Ju Dou* and *Raise the Red Lantern*, Zhang Yimou here makes typical stylistic use of red hues in a gangster melodrama which has all the operatic grandeur of the best of '5th Generation' Chinese films. A parable about greed, *Shanghai Triad* follows a classic pattern: the city epitomises all that is corrupt while the country is a site of simple, honest values. Yimou explores this dichotomy through the three central characters, all of whom have their territory marked out for them. Shuisheng is the fresh innocent; the Boss – a sinister cockroach-like figure in his black mantle and dark glasses – is the festering city dweller, and Bijou is a former country girl now trapped in the Boss' tarnished (male) world.

Yimou structures the film mostly from Shuisheng's point of view, revealing, bit by bit, the full horror of the Boss' schemes. Exposition hinges on

things only being briefly glimpsed or overheard – the full truth remaining obscured until the stark finale by which time Shuisheng's world has been turned literally upside-down (with the camera askew too), as he sails back to Shanghai hanging by his feet. The first killing is viewed from a distance. The massacre of the servants orchestrated by Fat Yu is seen as shadow play. Shuisheng overhears Bijou's death being plotted while crouching in the reeds. With so few dramatic events placed centre-frame, the violence that pervades *Shanghai Triad* is all the more unsettling. We don't witness these deaths but rather their consequences.

Zhang's exploration of betrayal and deception is astonishing for its elaborate visual schema – the blood reds and pallid blue-grays of the island scenes suggest a draining sickness. The film's strength derives from the character of Bijou. It is Gong Li's greatest role so far, surpassing her already sublime playing in *Ju Dou*, *Raise the Red Lantern* and *To Live*, playing to the hilt a spoilt strumpet commanding her little world in the most despotic of ways. With a disdainful click of her fingers, she can have a servant's tongue cut out. There is a certain vaudevillean style to Gong's characterisation. Head held disdainfully aloft, she sashays around in her satin frocks and high heels. But there is also a poignancy in such behaviour, as when Shuisheng spies her throwing a frenzied tantrum in her bedroom. In that moment, she seems to recognize that, in the Boss's world, she's no different from the baubles she is smashing.

The song 'Pretending' is her theme tune, although ultimately it is she who is duped by those around her. There is a delicate pathos in her brief friendship with Cuihua, her one moment in the company of another woman, and the instance on the dockside when she sings a nursery rhyme with the children – a sweet song which provides a desperate coda to the film. In these brief moments there erupts a full sense of what Bijou might be about. The moll with a heart: a familiar figure, her tragic status secured by the fact that she tries to play by the boy's rules but loses, discarded like a worn-out doll that can be easily replaced in the raw scheme of it all.

Lizzie Francke

Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana (Pidä Huivista Kiinni, Tatjana)

Finland 1994

Director: Aki Kaurismäki

Certificate

Not Yet Issued

Distributor

ICA Projects

Production Companies

Sputnik

Pandora Film/Suomen Elokuvasäätiö /YLEisradio/

TV-1/Marianne Möller/Eila Werning

Producer

Aki Kaurismäki

Production Manager

Jaakko Talaskivi

Assistant Directors

Erkki Astala

Sakke Järvenpää

Screenplay

Aki Kaurismäki

Sakke Järvenpää

Script Supervisor

Erja Dammert

Director of Photography

Timo Salminen

Editor

Aki Kaurismäki

Art Directors

Kari Laine

Markku Pätilä

Jukka Salmi

Costume Design

Tuula Hilkamo

Songs/Music Extract

"If I Had Someone to Dream Of" by Lindskog.

Feichtinger, "Hold Me Close", "Bad Bad Baby".

"I've Been Unkind" by Brown, Gibson,

Johnson, Mallett, "Girls, Girls, Girls" by Jerry

Leiber, Mike Stoller, The Renegades, performed

by The Renegades, "Sabina" by Karu,

Jauhiainen, Lasanen, performed by Veikko

Tuomi, "Old Scars" by H. Konno, performed by

The Blazers; "Kun kylmä on" (Russian folksong),

performed by Viktor Vassel; "Think it Over"

by B. B. King, performed by The Regals; "Etkö

uskalla mua rakastaa" by Lindström, Saukki,

performed by Helena Siltala; "Tanssi, Anjuska"

by Kemppe, Pertti Husu, performed by Veikko

Lavi, Pertti Husu; "Muista Minua" by Pedro

de Punta, The Esquires, performed by The

Esquires; "Mustanmeren valssi" by

Feldsman, Salonen, Borg, performed by

Georg Ots; "Köyhä laulaja" by Toivo Kärki,

Kullervo, Johansson, performed by Henry

Theel; "Symphony No. 6" by Pyotr Tchaikovsky

Sound

Jouko Lumme

Sound Mixer

Tom Forsström

Cast

Kati Outinen

Tatjana

Matti Pellonpää

Reino

Kirsi Tykkyläinen

Klavdia

Mato Valttonen

Valdemar "Valto"

Reiman

Elna Salo

Hotel Manageress

Irma Junnilainen

Valto's Mother

Veikko Lavi

Vepe

Pertti Husu

Pepe

Viktor Vassel

Bus Driver

Carl-Erik Calamnius

Gas Station Attendant

Atte Blom

Mauri Sumén

Barkeepers

The Regals

The Renegades

Themselves

Anu Aalto

Matti Ahjoniemi

Riitta Ahjoniemi

Inka Ahonen

Hannu Collin

Hannu Erola

Marianne Erola

Pekka Forsström

Päivi Forsström

Anita Harmanen

Heli Heino

Matti Heino

Pertti Heiskanen

Toni Heiskanen

Pentti Helenius

Satu Henriksson

Teemu Hilkamo

Pentti Hämiläinen

Martti Härkönen

Johanna Juslin

Jatta Katramo

Minja Kemppainen

Risto Kontinen

Auli Korhonen

Veikko Koski

Marko Koskinen

Antero Kupiainen

Atso Laari

Eero Laurén

Pekka Leino

Marko Myllyniemi

Marie-Christine Möller-Salmi

Reima Neuvonen

Matti Nieminen

Jarmo Nikander

Leena Nikander

Mika Nikander

Satu Nikander

Sami Nordman

Anja Nyholm

Tarmo Nyholm

Mikko Paavilainen

Anne Palmunen

Tiina Palviainen

Olavi Pekkola

Arto Perälä

Taina Piipponen

Seppo Pitkonen

Jouppi Polkko

Päivi Rantamäki

Milja Rantanen

Jukka Rautiainen

Reino Rautiainen

Mikko Rokkonen

Timo Rynänen

Kirsi Salmela-Paso

Taisto Salo

Anne Stalberg

Finland, the mid-60s. Coffee-addicted Valto locks his mother in the cupboard and steals her money, then goes to a coffee bar to unwrap his new acquisition – an in-car coffee maker. He goes to collect his black Volga station wagon from mechanic Reino and suggests they go for a drive. On the road, the vodka-swilling Reino boasts about his exploits as a rocker. Stopping off at a café, they meet two young Soviet women who hitch a lift to the port for Tallinn – Tatjana, from Estonia, and Klavdia from Alma-Ata.

They check in for the night at a hotel, pairing off for bedrooms, but, to the women's frustration, there is little communication between the sexes. The men drop the women off at the ferry to Tallinn, then decide to join them. Klavdia leaves by train, and at Tatjana's house, Reino announces he will stay behind with her. Valto returns on the ferry, and imagines the four of them in their car crashing through the window of a bar. Returning home, he lets his mother out of the cupboard and resumes work at his sewing machine.

All Aki Kaurismäki films are more or less versions of each other, and each one's ambivalent blend of depression and absurdist farce rarely seems entirely comprehensible outside the context of the others. For British viewers, it was something of an advantage that several of his features, from *Ariel* onwards, were released here in quick succession, thus creating a 'Kaurismäki effect', a readability enhanced by rapid acquisition of cult status. As is often the way, that status declined almost overnight after the release of *I Hired a Contract Killer*, and his *La Vie de Bohème* and *Leningrad Cowboys Meet Moses* never saw theatrical release here.

Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana may be the film to reinstate Kaurismäki's status and to prove that his work was always more than a dour gag. This is the consummate Kaurismäki film, a lyrical, compact anecdote that is more instantly accessible than most of his others, but that also serves as a résumé of their themes and moods. There's the road-movie format of *Ariel*, the matching male and female despondencies of *Contract Killer* and *The Little Match Girl* and the lugubrious pop existentialism of *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*.

Like that last film, this is another tale about clueless overgrown adolescents going it alone to the sound of what may be the world's worst rock music. Finnish R&B resonates from start to finish, and much of it, presumably of genuine mid-60s vintage, has the unmistakably ersatz sound of period Euro-Americana. But the music proves remarkably poignant, because whatever the idiocy of the Finnish teens painstakingly trying to match the sound of the Standells or Them, they represent a craziness and a verve that the inept, almost comatose Valto and Reino can't get anywhere near. Reino may dress up in leathers and snakeskin shirt, and he and Valto may live the tough life, camping by night (Valto, morosely toasting a sausage by

firelight, remarks that a rocker's must surely be a hard life); but they seem to miss out entirely on the traditional pleasures of the road. Almost incapable of communicating with women, they subsist on endless amounts of vodka, coffee and staring into space. They don't even have the dubious compensation – as did the equally glum heroes of *La Vie de Bohème* – of being 'artists'.

Tatjana follows on from that film in its rather sour admission of the possibility of love. The two men – chronically awkward, introspective and seemingly vacant – are unable to make contact with their passengers, even though Tatjana and the pragmatically flirtatious Klavdia are making all the right signals. What makes the film poignant is the men's complete blindness – to the women, the landscape (by no means breathtaking, but bucolically pleasant enough), indeed anything around them. They look straight ahead, Reino into his bottle, Valto into the coffee cup, crouched ox-like over café tables as though still toiling in his mother's sweatshop. In fact, this Finland seems to be a world in which no one is much attuned to the possibilities of life. Valto's mother hardly seems bothered to be locked in a cupboard for days on end; and in a wonderfully stark shot, the foursome wander into an austere hotel dining room, while in the foreground, the manageress – modelled apparently on Jeanne Moreau – sits gazing impassively in her cubicle.

When love does become a possibility, Kaurismäki only just hints at the prospect of sentiment. A stark chiarascuro composition – as though cinematographer Timo Salminen had decided to concoct a quintessential 60s art-film shot – has Reino at the hotel room window, with Tatjana caught in his shadow, pinned rigidly against the wall. It's followed by a close-up of her gently removing a wilting fag-end from his sleeping hand – a shot both tender and absurdly squalid. Later, she lays her head on his shoulder, and he, first looking nervously sideways, puts an arm round her. The generic nature of the blossoming-of-love scene is utterly undermined yet still made touching by the child-like awkwardness of the figures – Matti Pellonpää's shifty Reino, and Tatjana, played by the whey-faced, angular Kati Outinen.

Without the obvious extremities of *Leningrad Cowboys* or *Contract Killer*, this is Kaurismäki's most successfully ambivalent film yet. It encourages you to read it at once as downbeat blue-collar realism à la Fassbinder, poker-faced farce in the vein of the early *Comic Strip* television films, and committed pop nostalgia. The fact is that the three registers chime compellingly together, and Salminen's black-and-white compositions allow the banal non-places they visit to take on unexpectedly resonance. The film is also a fitting farewell to the late Matti Pellonpää, Kaurismäki regular and star of Jim Jarmusch's *Night on Earth*, who died earlier this year; his twitchy drowned-rat demeanour was never seen to more subtle effect.

Jonathan Romney

To Die For

USA 1995

Director: Gus Van Sant

Certificate

15

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Columbia Pictures

Executive Producers

Jonathan Taplin

Joseph M. Caracciolo

Producer

Laura Ziskin

Co-producers

Sandy Isaac

Leslie Morgan

Production Co-ordinator

Regina Robb

Unit Production Manager

Steven J. D. Wakefield

Location Manager

Gordon Yang

Assistant Directors

David Webb

Tom Quinn

Michele Rakich

Casting

Howard Feuer

Canada:

Deirdre Bowen

Screenplay

Buck Henry

Based on the novel

by Joyce Maynard

Script Supervisor

Kathryn Buck

Director of Photography

Eric Alan Edwards

Camera Operator

Perry Hoffmann

Editor

Curtiss Clayton

Associate Editors

Amy E. Duddleston

Craig Hayes

Production Designer

Missy Stewart

Art Director

Vlasta Svoboda

Set Decorator

Carol A. Lavoie

Scenic Artist

Willi Holst

Special Effects

Laird McMurray Film

Services

Death Sequence Eye

Effects:

Chel White

Costume Design

Beatrix Aruna Pasztor

Wardrobe Supervisor

Delphine White

Make-up

Patricia Green

Hairstylist

David R. Beecroft

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Danny Elfman

Music Conductor

Richard Stone

Orchestrations

Edgardo Simone

Steve Bartek

Music Editor

Ellen Segal

Music Consultant

Jeffrey Pollack

Songs/Music Extracts

"Susie Q." by Eleanor

Broadwater, Dale

Hawkins, Stanley J.

Lewis; "Nothing From

Nothing" by Billy

Preston, Bruce Fisher,

performed by Billy

Preston; "Godanginuta"

performed by Keiko
Nosaka, Sachiko
Miyamoto; "Wasting
Away" by Max Cavalera,
Alex Newport,
performed by
Naïlbomb; "Wings of
Desire" by Mark
Tierney, Paul Casserly,
Fiona McDonald,
performed by
Strawpeople; "Live it
Cool" by Junior
Vasquez, Lydia Rhodes,
performed by Lydia
Rhodes; "Sweet Home
Alabama" by Edward
King, Gary Rossington,
Ronnie Van Zant,
performed by Lynyrd
Skynyrd; "All By
Myself" by Eric
Carmen, Sergei
Rachmaninoff,
performed by Eric
Carmen; "Season of the
Witch" by Donovan
Leitch, performed by
Donovan

Supervising Sound Editor

Kelley Baker

ADR

Burton Sharp

Sound Recordist/Mixers

Robert Fernandez

Bill Jackson

Production Mixer

Owen Langevin

Sound Re-recording Mixers

David Parker

Michael Semanick

Sound Effects Editors

Peter Appleton

Mary Bauer

David Cohen

Cast

Nicole Kidman

Suzanne Stone

Matt Dillon

Larry Maretto

Joaquin Phoenix

Jimmy Emmett

Casey Affleck

Russell Hines

Ileana Douglas

Janice Maretto

Alison Folland

Lydia Mertz

Dan Hedaya

Joe Maretto

Wayne Knight

Ed Grant

Kurtwood Smith

Earl Stone

Holland Taylor

Carol Stone

Susan Traylor

Faye Stone

Maria Tucci

Angela Maretto

Tim Hopper

Mike Warden

Michael Rispoli

Ben DeLuca

Buck Henry

Mr Finlaysson

Gerry Quigley

George

Tom Forrester

Alan Edward Lewis

Fishermen

Nadine MacKinnon

Sexy Woman

Conrad Coates

Weaselly Guy

Ron Gabriel

Sal

Ian Heath

Graeme Millington

Sean Ryan

Students

Nicholas Pasco

Detective

Joyce Maynard

Lawyer

David Collins

Eve Crawford

JanetLo

Reporters

David Cronenberg

Man at Lake

Tom Quinn

Skating Promoter

Peter Glenn

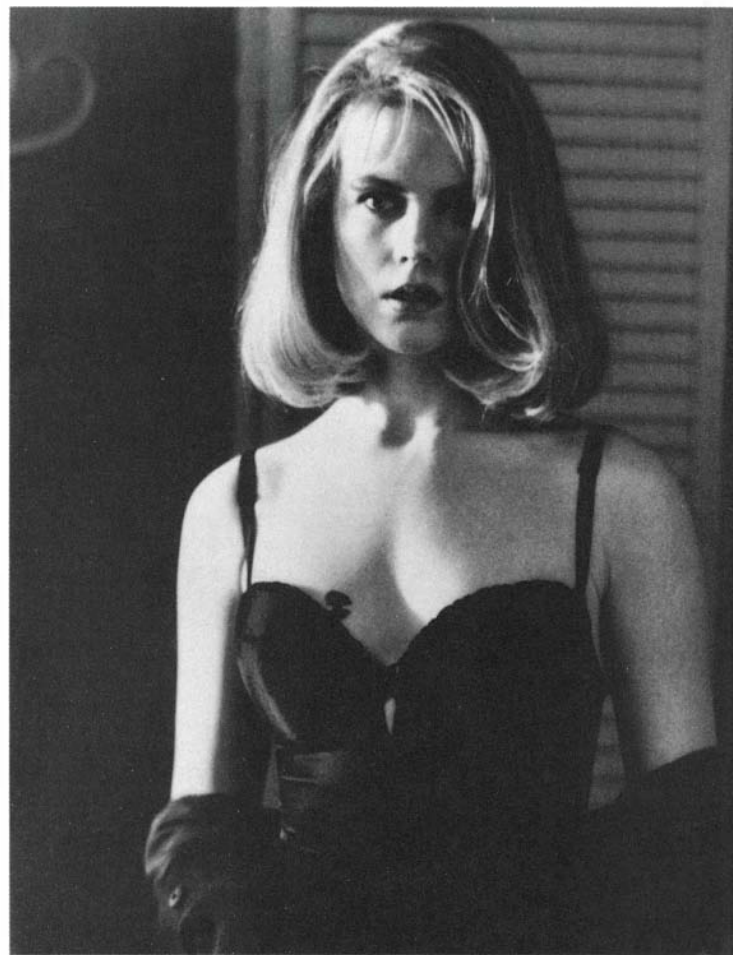
Priest

Amber-Lee Campbell

Suzanne, age 5

Colleen Williams

Valerie Mertz



Lightfooted and lethal: Nicole Kidman

Simon Richards
Chester
Philip Williams
Babe Hines
Susan Backs
June Hines
Kyra Harper
Mary Emmett
Adam Roth
Andrew Scott
Band Members
Tamara Gorski
Katie Griffin

Carla Renee
Girls at Bar
Misha
Walter the dog

9.597 feet
107 minutes

Original Running Time
Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

A worldwide media sensation erupts over a murder case concerning Suzanne Stone, glamorous weather presenter on the local cable TV station in Little Hope, New Hampshire. While Suzanne's relatives, in-laws and others involved in the case are interviewed on television, she herself narrates her story to an unseen listener....

Ambitious and television-fixated from an early age, Suzanne is briefly diverted from her chosen career by falling for Larry Maretto, whose parents run the town's Italian restaurant. Despite the warnings of his sister Janice, a budding ice-skater, Larry marries Suzanne. On their honeymoon in Florida, while Larry goes deep-sea fishing, Suzanne ingratiates herself with a top television personality at a convention. Back in Little Hope, Suzanne bulldozes her way into the cable station WWEN, secures the job of weather presenter and bombards station head Ed Grant with ideas for programmes. He reluctantly approves a project involving high school kids, and she recruits three no-hopers: Jimmy, Russell and Lydia. Fascinated by her apparent interest in them, the three become devotedly attached to her.

Larry, urged on by his parents, is eager to start a family. Seeing her career threatened, Suzanne seduces Jimmy and tells him Larry mistreats her. Jimmy and Russell borrow a gun belonging to Lydia's father, break into the house and shoot Larry dead. With the aid of WWEN's taped footage, the police soon trace the teenagers and extract confessions from them, but Suzanne asserts her innocence, and is released on bail. In a television interview she claims that Larry was a junkie and that Jimmy and Russell were his suppliers. Completing her account of events to a camcorder, Suzanne takes the tape and drives to meet a man claiming to be a Hollywood producer. The man, a mafia operative, later phones Larry's father to report that Suzanne is safely under the ice of a frozen lake. While Lydia makes her first television appearance as a consultant on teenage dieting, Janice Maretto happily skates over the lake.

The message of *To Die For* – that the media, and television in particular, are threatening to usurp every alternative take on events – isn't so far from that of *Natural Born Killers*. But where Stone slammed his points relentlessly home, incurring the very faults he aimed to castigate, Van Sant's film skips playfully over the same territory, keeping its satire lightfooted and lethal. With Van Sant's idiosyncratic

visual flair yoked to a sharp script from Buck Henry, it's easily his best work since *Drugstore Cowboy*, redeeming the chaotic waywardness of *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*.

"I always knew who I was, and who I wanted to be," Suzanne confides to her unseen listener, adding later, "On TV is where we learn about who we really are." The contradiction is only apparent, since in her mind Suzanne has always been on television; for her, no other world exists. ("You aren't really anybody in America if you're not on TV," she tells Lydia.) Nicole Kidman plays her not merely as a bimbo, but as a woman who has concentrated down to one obsessively narrow focus, leaving herself brain-and-heart-dead outside it. At one point, as Larry talks to her about having kids, her subjective-angle shot of him shrinks to a tight circle around his head – expressive both of the gun she plans to have aimed at him, and of her tunnel-vision.

Kidman's exactly gauged – and very funny – performance is matched by those of her co-actors, none of whom is allowed to go over the top. Matt Dillon works a sympathetic variation on his preening grunge-rocker from *Singles*, genuinely touching in his starry-eyed inability to recognise the monster he's married to. There's a fine display of caustic disbelief from Illeana Douglas as his sister Janice, and an unbilled George Segal puts in a creepily avuncular appearance as a predatory television star. As Lydia, the student least likely to, Alison Folland makes an impressive screen debut: graceless, lumpy, her mouth permanently adroop, she trots round after Suzanne in doggy devotion, seeing everything and understanding nothing.

Much of *To Die For*'s mordant wit derives from its fluent editing, deftly juxtaposing the various displaced narratives – voice-over, screen interview, reported speech – with the deglamoured reality. "It was the most exciting time of my life," Lydia's voice-over tells us, as we see her drearily minding Suzanne's lapdog while Suzanne and Jimmy are exercising the bedsprings. As Larry begs abjectly for his life before being blown away, the scene is intercut with Suzanne on television, concluding her usual weather report with a fulsome "special greeting to my husband", having chosen their first wedding anniversary for his death date.

These gags, glittering black comedy in themselves, are also intrinsic to the film's theme – that television, far from offering access to some inner truth, as Suzanne believes, distorts and devalues, sacrificing insight to facile celebrity. Even the most unpromising material can be turned to account. At the end of the film, with Suzanne dead, Lydia of all people is groomed for teledom. As we watch, her image quadruples and finally fills the screen in multiple postage-stamp reproduction. Meanwhile Suzanne gazes sightlessly out through the ice – preserved, as she always wished, in frozen perfection behind a transparent screen.

Philip Kemp

Under Siege 2

USA 1995

Director: Geoff Murphy

Certificate

18

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

In association with

Regency Enterprises

Executive Producers

Gary Goldstein

Jeffrey Neuman

Martin Wiley

Producers

Steven Seagal

Steve Perry

Arnon Milchan

Co-producer

Julius R. Nasso

Associate Producers

Edward McDonnell

Dan Romero

Doug Metzger

Production Associate

Maryellen Aviano

Unit Production Manager

Paul Moen

Location Managers

Antoinette Levine

Martine White

T. Huw Davies

2nd Unit Director

Dick Zicker

Assistant Directors

Denis Stewart

Sean Kavanagh

Craig A. Pinckes

Michael Kahn

Craig A. Pinckes

Casting

Louis Di Giaimo

Associate:

Emilie Talbot

Screenplay

Richard Hatem

Matt Reeves

Based on characters

created by J. F. Lawton

Script Supervisors

Jeanne Byrd

Connie Papineau

2nd Unit:

Mamie Mitchell

Director of Photography

Robbie Greenberg

Additional Photography

Alexander Witt

Rick Bota

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Michael Gershman

Visual Effects Director

of Photography

Richard Yuricich

Aerial Photography

Frank Holgate

Don Morgan

Camera Operators

Conrad Hall

Greg Lundsgaard

Terry Bowen

Chris Duddy

Russell McElhatton

Stedcam Operator

Greg Lundsgaard

Video/Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Elizabeth Radley

Co-ordinators:

Rick Murken

Jennifer Campbell

Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Richard Yuricich

Producer:

Lori J. Nelson

Editors:

Lucy Hofert Rose

Jennifer Jew

Art Director:

Brent Boates

Digital Film Services

Cinesite

Supervisor:

Brad Kuehn

Head of Production:

Mitzi Gallagher

Associate Producer:

Michele Vallillo

Digital Compositing

Supervisor:

Thomas J. Smith

Digital Compositing

Artists:

Jerry Pooler

John Rauh

Greg Liegey

Anthony Mabin

Digital Paint

Supervisor:

Kevin Lingenfelter

Digital Artists:

Ken Dackerman

Lisa Tse

Digital Motion

Tracking Supervisors:

Rodney Iwashina

Derek Spears

Digital Co-ordinator:

Eugene Ridenour

Digital Effects

Metrolight Studios

Executive Producer:

Dobbie Schiff

Supervisor:

William Kent

Producer:

Tamara L. Watt

Supervising Animators:

Yau Chen

Rosa Farre

Supervising Modeller:

Con Pederson

Computer Animators:

Jim Berney

Rebecca Ruether

Daniel Loeb

Alan Ridenour

Matte Artist

Rocco Gioffre

Editor

Michael Tronick

Production Designer

Albert Brenner

Art Director

Carol Wood

Set Decorator

Kathe Klopp

Illustrators

Brent Boates

Darryl Henley

Miniatures

B-2/F117 Train Models:

WKR Productions

Huey Helicopter:

Larry Jolly Productions

Special Effects Co-ordinator

Dale L. Martin

Special Effects

Timothy J. Moran

Frank Schepler

Joe Quinlivan

Todd K. Jensen

Ed Felix

Grande Gonzalez

David F. Schadle

Mike Gelfuso

Dan Rawson

Blumes Tracy

Robert Worthington

John Kilpatrick

Emmet Kane

Joe Hafferman

Full Scale Train Crash

Mock-up

Donald Pennington Inc

Pyrotechnics Supervisor

Joseph Viskocil

Costume Design

Richard Bruno

Costume Supervisor

Hugo Pena

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Executive Producer:

Joe Gareri

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

David Sosalla

Digital Effects

Co-ordinators:

Robin Saxen

Jennifer Scheer

Digital Effects Artists:

Mimi Abers

Patrick Phillips

Olivier Sarda

Greg Rostami

Music/Music Conductor

Basil Poledouris

Orchestrations

Greig McRitchie

Lolita Litmanis

Music Editor

Curtis Roush

Songs

"After the Train Has

Gone" by Steven Seagal,

Todd Smallwood,

performed by Gregg

Allman, Abraham

McDonald, Todd

Smallwood, Jean

McClain, Steven Seagal,

Erica Bell, Tory Baker

Sound Design

Christopher Boyes

Supervising Sound Editors

Alan Robert Murray

David Trilling

ADR Supervisor

James Beshears

Foley Supervisor

Scott D. Jackson

Dialogue Editors

Lucy Goldsnow-Smith

Constance A. Kazmer

George Anderson

David Giammarco

ADR Editors

Jessica Gallavan

William C. Carruth

Foley Editors

Niel Burrow

Butch Wolf

Matthew Harrison

Leonard T. Geschke

Production Sound Mixer

Edward Tise

Music Recordist

Tim Boyle

Re-recording Mixers

John Reitz

David Campbell

Greg Rudloff

Dick Alexander

Ken S. Polk

Sound Effects Editors

Christopher Aud

John V. Bonds Jr

Fred Brown

Milton C. Burrow

Samuel C. Crutcher

Mike Dobie



Old wave: Steven Seagal

the code and are summarily thrown from the train.

Dane can now control the Star Wars system from the train. He threatens to blow up the nuclear reactor under the Pentagon and lay waste to Washington, D.C., unless he is paid one billion dollars. To show he means business, Dane uses the satellite to destroy a chemical weapons plant in China.

Fortunately, also on board is former cook and ex-Navy SEAL Casey Ryback, travelling on vacation with his niece Sarah. When the commotion starts, Casey hides out and enlists the reluctant aid of a porter named Bobby Zachs. Casey faxes word to Washington of his presence on the train, and manages to kill a number of stray mercenaries before his identity is eventually uncovered by Dane and Penn. The villains take Sarah hostage.

The military officials decide to shoot down the satellite, but the resourceful Dane outfoxes them. Casey breaks into the control room where he obtains the CD controlling the weapons system. In a pitched battle, however, he apparently falls to his death, and Dane recovers the CD. But the unscathed Casey leaps from a pick-up truck back onto the moving train.

The Washington brass order the bombing of the train, but Dane thwarts them. He then switches tracks, and sets the train on a collision course with another train carrying 800,000 gallons of gasoline. Casey and Bobby save the other passengers. Penn threatens Sarah with a hand grenade, but Casey kills him. The armed forces explode the satellite in the nick of time, and a helicopter lifts all the good guys to safety as the two trains crash in a considerable pyrotechnic display.

● Criticising *Under Siege 2* is about as superfluous an act as reviewing a tin of baked beans. Nothing one says can possibly affect the money-spinning capacity of so routine a corporate product, which does without style, characterisation or even basic coherence in order to give the undemanding audience worldwide what it presumably paid for: a spiralling body count and explosions.

Ten or 20 years ago, this kind of *reductio ad absurdum* film-making was thought to appeal to lonely urban men and pre-literate peoples; but now the big dumb action movie has become respectable, and post-literates are included as well. At the preview I

attended, a row of young men behind me were happily quoting chapter and verse from *Timecop 2* and *Missing in Action 3*, eager to see how the latest Steven Seagal opus clocked stunts-wise and FX-wise against its competitors.

They probably weren't disappointed. *Under Siege 2* spends maybe 15 minutes setting up its threadbare computer-terrorist plot. In the remaining 85 or so, Seagal simply roams about dispatching mercenaries with the *blasé* air of a salesman fulfilling a quota. It seems beside the point to complain that the movie dehumanises death (a fair chunk of China gets reduced to cinders, and no one bats an eye) or that the director Geoff Murphy is incapable of building suspense. He too fulfils his quota for viewers who want serial jolts without the tedious armature of dramatic involvement. Structurally, *Under Siege 2* is just one damned thing after another, and kinæsthetically, it has no real pay-off. Albeit, there's a gorgeous fireball at the end, but in the circumstances it functions less as the orgasmic release of accumulated tension than as a mechanical punctuation mark (! or perhaps !!!) telling customers they can – blessedly – go home.

Under Siege 2 qualifies as virtually a remake rather than a sequel, since about all the writers Richard Hatem and Matt Reeves have done is to introduce some slight variants on the paradigm (a train instead of a battleship, a jiving black sidekick for 'Miss July'), as if in some brazen display of neo-formalism. The movie practically comes out and says, 'Why tamper with a sure thing?'. Why indeed, unless you hope to send your audience out in something more than a mood of sodden acceptance? Jan de Bont's fantastically adroit and elating *Speed* put so dynamic a spin on its generic ingredients that it made them new. Even *Under Siege* (directed by Andrew Davis) chugged along efficiently if unmemorably, and managed to work up some minimal sense of peril. But *Under Siege 2* is a rather more abstract exercise in mayhem: for all the attention it pays to them, the terrorised passengers might as well be sacks of flour.

I'm far from being an enthusiast for this sort of affectless, rococo violence; but at least when John Woo does it, he choreographs like Busby Berkeley. Murphy stages the fight scenes so slackly and Michael Tronick edits so wham-bam fast that one loses the pleasure of lucidly articulated movement. The editing appears to cover a multitude of sins – not least the martial inadequacies of the star. As Casey Ryback, Seagal waggles his hands impressively from time to time, but otherwise scarcely exerts his portly bulk. His anomic indifference to the bone-crunching, neck-snapping natural justice he metes out might be satirical in another context; here, it just seems apt. A truly spirited action hero like Errol Flynn or Keanu Reeves makes you feel that no problem in the world can't be licked. The stolid, listless Seagal merely invites you to share in his own apathy.

Peter Matthews

A Walk in the Clouds

USA 1995

Director: Alfonso Arau

Certificate
PG

Distributor
20th Century Fox
Production Company
20th Century Fox

Executive Producer
James D. Brubaker

Producers

Gil Netter

David Zucker

Jerry Zucker

Co-producer

Bill Johnson

Associate Producer

Stephen Lytle

Production Supervisor

Tina L. Fortenberry

Production Co-ordinator

Gretchen van

Zeebroeck

Illusion Arts:

Catherine Sudolcan

Unit Production Managers

James D. Brubaker

Paul Moen

Location Managers

Illusion Arts:

Steven Shkolnik

Napa Unit:

Rory Enke

Assistant Directors

Newt Arnold

David Sosna

Kenneth Silverstein

David McWhirter

Casting

John Lyons

Christine Sheaks

ADR Voice:

Barbara Harris

The Loop Group

Screenplay

Robert Mark Kamen

Mark Miller

Harvey Weitzman

Original Story/Screenplay

Piero Tellini

Cesare Zavattini

Vittorio de Benedetti

Based on the 1942 film

Quattro passi fra le nuvole

Script Supervisors

Wilma Garscadden-

Gahrt

Ingrid Ulrich-Sass Arias

Director of Photography

Emmanuel Lubezki

Optical Photography

David S. Williams Jnr

Matte Photography

Mark Sawicki

Dave Stump

Camera Operator

Rodrigo Garcia

Special Visual Effects

Illusion Arts

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Digital Supervisor

Richard Patterson

Digital Animation

Fumi Maskimo

Matte Artists

Robert Stromberg

Mike Wassel

Matte Effects

Lynn Ledgerwood

Editor

Don Zimmerman

Production Designer

David Gropman

Visual Consultant

Harold Michelson

Art Director

Daniel Maltese

Set Design

Robert Fechtman

Set Decorator

Denise Pizzini

Set Dressers

Mara Massey

Napa Unit:

Emilio Ricardo

Aramendia

Illustrator

Brent Boates

Marc Vena

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

John McLeod

Dream Sequences:

Bruno van Zeebroeck

Special Effects Foreman

Scott Forbes

Costume Design

Judy L. Ruskin

Wardrobe Supervisor

Lahly Poore

Key Make-up Artist

Julie Hewett

Key Hairstylist

Beth Miller

Wig Design

Erwin H. Kupitz

Title Design

Nina Saxon Film

Design

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music:

Maurice Jarre

Music Performed by

Classical Guitar Solos:

Liona Boyd

Folkloric Singers:

Maria Entraigues

Cecilia Noel

Music Conductor

Maurice Jarre

Music Supervisor

Ruy Folguera

Music Editors

Dan Carlin Snr

Source:

Dominick Certo

Songs

"Crush the Grapes",

"Mariachi's Serenade"

by Alfonso Arau, Leo

Brouwer, performed

by Roberto Huerta,

Juan Jimenez, Febronio

Covarrubias, Ismael

Gallegos; "Beer Barrel

Polka" by Wladimir A.

Timm, Jaromir Vejvoda,

Lew Brown; "Cancion

mixteca" by José Lopez

Alavez, performed by

Ismael Gallegos

Supervising Sound Editor

Don Hall

Sound Editors

Phillip Linson

Cindy Marty

Roxanne Jones

McCarthy

Supervising ADR Editor

R. J. Kizer

ADR Editor

George Anderson

Sound Mixer

José Antonio Garcia

Sound Recordists

Tim Gomillion

Carrie Landaker

Minkler

ADRMixer

Thomas J. O'Connell

ADR Recordist

Rick Canelli

Foley Mixer

Mary Jo Lang

Foley Recordist

Carolyn Tapp

Music Recordist/Mixer

Shawn Murphy

Music Recordist

Sue McLean

Re-recording Mixers

Sergio Reyes

Bill W. Benton

B. Tennyson Sebastian

III

Chris Carpenter

Foley Artists

John Roesch

Zane Bruce

Hilda Hodges

Technical Adviser

Rafael Rodriguez

Consultants

ADR Dialect:

Yareli Arizmendi

Drama:

Silvana Gallardo

Historical/Cultural:

Massimo Tellini

World War II:

Charles M. Bernstein

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jake Crawford

Bee Wrangler

Norman Gary

Snake Control

L. A. Smith

Marc Smith

Film Extracts

World War II footage

from Fox Movietone

News

Cast

Keanu Reeves

Paul Sutton

Aitana Sanchez-Gijon

Victoria Aragon

Anthony Quinn

Don Pedro Aragon

Giancarlo Giannini

Alberto Aragon

Angelica Aragon

Marie José Aragon

Evangeline Elizondo

Guadalupe Aragon

Freddy Rodriguez

Pedro Aragon Jnr

Debra Messing

Betty Sutton

Febronio Covarrubias

José Manuel

Roberto Huerta

José Luis

Juan Jimenez

José Marie

Ismael Gallegos

José's Musical Son

Alejandra Flores

Consuelo

Gema Sandoval

Maria

Don Amendolia

Father Coturri

Gregory Martin

Armistead Knox

Mary Pat Gleason

Bus Driver

John Dennis Johnston

Joseph Lindsey

Louts

Mark Matheisen

Soldier

Macon McCalman

Conductor

Ivory Ocean

Truck Driver

Fred Burri

● Northern California. The 1940s. When young GI Paul Sutton returns home from the war, he is a changed man. Haunted by nightmares of a bomb devastating an orphanage, by day he dreams of building a new life for himself and his young wife Betty. She, on the other hand, is quite happy with the old one. Refusing to take his change of heart seriously, she pressures him into resuming his old job as a travelling chocolate salesman.

While he is on his travels, Paul runs into Victoria Aragon, the beautiful, pregnant and unmarried daughter of a vineyard owner. Traumatized at the thought of what her father will say, Victoria leans on Paul's shoulder and promptly throws up. Unperturbed, Paul offers to help her face her domineering father by posing as her husband. Flaunting matching fake wedding bands made from chocolate wrappers, the two arrive at the family vineyard and are warmly welcomed by everyone. Everyone, that is, except Victoria's father, who harbours suspicions that things are not quite as they seem, and resentment that his only daughter appears to have married a man without a respectable past (Paul is an orphan) or a promising future.

Befriended by the kindly family patriarch Don Pedro, who develops a taste for Paul's confectionery, Paul abandons his original plan of sneaking off and stays at the Aragon vineyard. As the harvest ritual begins, he and Victoria gradually fall in love. Paul, however, is torn by his sense of duty to his real wife Betty. When Victoria's father suddenly announces a big party to celebrate his daughter's wedding, it is time to come clean. Paul returns home, and Victoria is left to patch things up with her brooding papa.

Back home, Paul discovers Betty in bed with another man. Realising that Victoria is the girl for him after all, he hot-foots it back to the vineyard, where a sudden fire gives him the chance to prove his loyalty to the Aragon family. When the fire all but destroys the vineyard, it is Paul who salvages the one undamaged root, thereby securing the family's livelihood and the approval of Victoria's father.

● A *Walk in the Clouds*, Alfonso Arau's follow-up to the acclaimed *Like Water for Chocolate* is like a chocolate box crammed full of strawberry creams – you know exactly what you're going to get, and there's always the danger that you'll be sick before you reach the end. Things begin promisingly enough, with a gorgeous title sequence reminiscent of 50s Hollywood at its most melodramatic – all sweeping strings and swollen, shining orbs, gradually revealed as grapes (symbol of fertility and, in the case of the man who grows them, of wrath). The scene is set for a tribute to the likes of Douglas Sirk, or at the very least a knowing pastiche of his work.

But that's about as knowing as this film gets. What follows is a plain old-fashioned movie without the charm of being old, or the sense to fashion itself

as irony. And unlike Sirk, who had a natural understanding of good melodrama and always ensured that there was some dark psychological truth lurking behind the schmaltz, Arau is all sweetness and light. There is nothing to suggest that things might not work out in time for the final credits. Even the wrath of Victoria's father is lightened by the love oozing from every other member of the family. It is romance without heartache, melodrama without drama. Confident that Paul and Victoria are going to end up in each other's arms, we hardly care whether they do or not.

That said, the film does have its attractions. Well, one anyway. Keanu Reeves was born to play the soppy Paul. Pretty but vacant, his airhead approach to acting makes him the natural choice for *A Walk in the Clouds*. Part of Reeves' appeal lies in his curious passivity. On screen he's the human equivalent of a black hole, helplessly absorbing everything projected his way. The audience's fascination with him is the fascination of waiting for the moment when he might finally implode.

A Walk in the Clouds is steeped in such moments. Here's Keanu reliving the horrors of war and life in the orphanage. Here's Keanu responding to the news that Victoria is pregnant ("It's a new life coming into the world. That's a miracle in itself.") Here's Keanu serenading his new lady-love whilst under the influence of too much wine. And here – at last! – is Keanu stripping down to his vest for some muscular heroics. At one point during the family conflict, Victoria's mama asks what the problem is. "This is the problem," says papa, gesturing to the dopey do-gooder. He's wrong, though: Reeves may be a disappointment in technical terms, but his star presence is what gives the film its centre.

What he can't do is lend it weight. Nor, despite their best efforts, can Atiana Sanchez-Gijon as Victoria, or Anthony Quinn as Don Pedro. Their roles are too small, their characters too under-developed to have any real impact. In an attempt to pin his flimsy confection of a film down, Arau lays on every hackneyed image of Hispanic love and pride known to man or Madonna. "We are very traditional people," says mama. "This modern world takes a bit of getting used to." But why get used to it at all, when the life you're living is so perfectly quaint?

Paul's motives for wanting to be a part of the Aragon family are obvious. Given the opportunity, who wouldn't swap a life on the road for the golden days and romantic nights, for treading grapes and getting sloshed while the cicadas chirp away merrily and some grinning idiot strums on a Spanish guitar? Unfortunately the viewer isn't so easily seduced. The growing sense of shameless manipulation reaches a natural peak at harvest time, when Paul gets a feel for the land and is rewarded with lingering reaction shots of sunny-faced, doe-eyed peasant women. The man from Del Monte, he say "No!"

Paul Burston

When Night is Falling

Canada 1995

Director: Patricia Rozema

Certificate

tbc

Distributor

Metro Tartan

Production Company

Crucial Pictures

In association with

Telefilm Canada

The Ontario Film

Development

Corporation

Producer

Barbara Tranter

Production Co-ordinator

Joanne Rivers

Location Managers

Andrew Munger

Thom Sokoloski

Assistant Directors

Stephen Reynolds

Cynthia Gillespie

Kayla Popp

Casting

Montreal:

Lucie Robitaille

New York:

Billy Hopkins Casting

Keqny Barden

Toronto:

John Buchan

Screenplay

Patricia Rozema

Continuity

France LaChapelle

Sarah Willinsky

Script Editor

Paul Bettis

Screenplay Consultant

Don McKellar

Director of Photography

Douglas Koch

Steadicam Operator

Rod Crombie

Editor

Susan Shipton

Production Designer

John Dondertman

Set Decorators

Megan Less

Rob Hepburn

Set Dresser

Michael Mullins

Cardboard Sculptures

Tim Hodge

Special Effects

Performance Solutions

Costume Design

Linda Muir

Make-up

Stephen Lynch

Hair stylist

Debra Johnson

Title Design

Pippa White

Titles/Opticals

Film Effects

John Furniotis

Music/Music Conductor

Lesley Barber

Music performed by

Violin:

Adele Armin

Second Violin:

Ruth Fazal

Viola:

Bridgette Lamarsh

Cello:

Richard Armin

Additional Percussion:

Blair Mackay

Electric Guitar:

Neil Chapman

Additional Electric

Guitar:

Shirley Eikhard

Harp:

Marie Boivert

Vocals:

Shirley Eikhard

Kathryn Rose

Song/Music Extract

"Hallelu jah" by

Leonard Cohen;

"Symphony No. 4

in D Minor, Op. 13"

by Antonin Dvork,

performed by West

Bohemian National

Orchestra

'The Iron Dance'

Choreography

Hillar Litoja

Dialogue Editor

Fred Brennan

Sound Recordist

Alan Geldart

Sound Re-recording Mixers

John Hazen

Corby Luke

Sound Effects Editor

Alan Geldart

Foley Artist

Sid Lieberman

Hang Gliding Consultant

Michael Robertson

Trapeze Act Creator

Andrew Watson

Cast

Pascale Bussières

Camille

Rachael Crawford

Petra

Henry Czerny

Martin

DavidFox

Reverend DeBoer

Don McKellar

Timothy

Tracy Wright

Tory

Clare Coulter

Tillie

Karyne Steben

Sarah Steben

Trapeze Artists

Jonathan Potts

Tom Melissis

StuartClow

Hang Gliders

Richard Farrell

Board President

Fides Krucker

Roaring Woman

Thom Sokoloski

Man with Goatee

Ruffian

Bob the Dog

Jennifer Roblin

Waitress

Jacqueline Casey

Sigrid Johnson

Iron Swingers

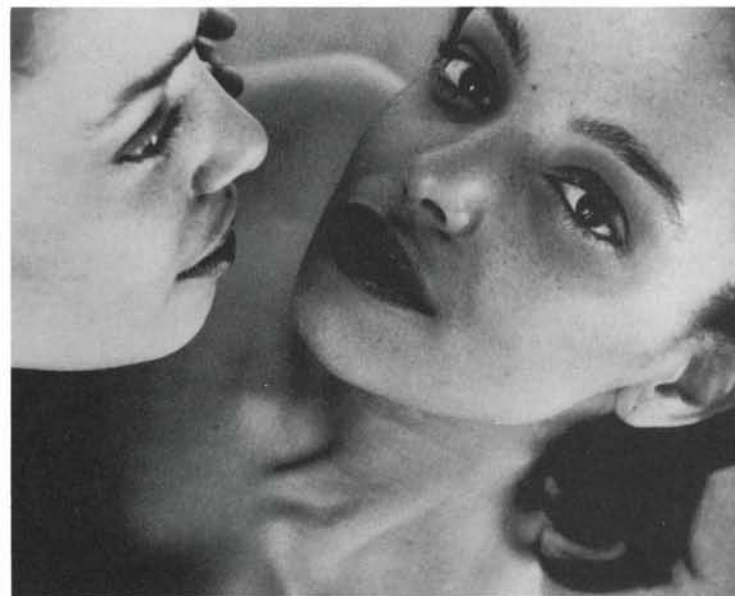
tbcfeet

tbc minutes

In colour

● Camille is a professor of mythology at the Christian New College of Faith. She and Martin, her theological boyfriend of three years standing, are being pressured by the principal, Rev DeBoer, to marry. When Camille's beloved dog, Bob, dies mysteriously, she finds comfort with Petra, a performer from the avant-garde Sirkus of Sorts whom she meets at a launderette. Petra switches laundry bags, so that Camille will seek her out. Meeting again, they kiss, but Camille insists on a friendship only.

Camille joins Martin at the College where they are about to be interviewed for promotion. She expresses concern about the Biblical prohibition against homosexuality. After a fun day hang-gliding with Petra, Camille returns home to make love with Martin. The next day, she goes to the circus, where she and Petra make love. She learns that Timothy and Tory, the circus owners, are in financial difficulties and that the show is about to leave town. Martin sees the women kissing and returns to Camille's flat, where they have a showdown. Camille goes back to the snowy countryside where she and Petra went hang-gliding. She buries Bob, then lays down in the snow to die. Later she is found, half-frozen, by Petra's gliding friends. Taking Camille in her arms, Petra prays for her lover's survival. The circus moves off. In Petra's caravan, the two women plan their future together. As the end credits roll, a resurrected Bob jumps from his grave.



Progressively steamy: Rachael Crawford, Pascal Bussières

The title of Patricia Rozema's *When Night Is Falling* comes from a speech by the character Gustav Adolf in Ingmar Bergman's *Fanny and Alexander* which runs: "The world is a den of thieves and night is falling... therefore let us be happy while we are happy." This quote was pinned up on director Patricia Rozema's wall for a while, but she chose her title without at first realising its source and happiness is not so much her theme here as desire. She uses film as a sensuous space in which to explore desire, with lesbianism her primary erotic vehicle. Like *I've Heard The Mermaids Singing*, the 1987 film which won Rozema the Cannes' *Prix de Jeunesse*, *When Night Is Falling* is centred on two female lovers, but there's much more confidence in the way that the sexual is foregrounded.

Progressively steamy encounters between Pascale Bussi eres' Camille and Rachel Crawford's Petra make very convincing viewing. Nevertheless this is not so much a film about lesbianism as it is about the unfolding of desire itself. Rozema looks beyond Camille's settled life, her relationship with Martin, and the attractive certainties of faith and a fixed sexual identity, to something altogether more central. The internal psychological process of Camille's sexual awakening is dramatised with some subtlety. If opportunities for overt gestural dramatics are sometimes missed – as in Camille and Martin's break-up (discussed obliquely in terms of a conversation on metaphysics) – it is only so that the individual emotion comes through. Hence, perhaps, the sense of the hyper-real which suffuses the film. Scenes of the Sirkus of Sorts and of the slowly fluid love-making of the women are painted in exaggerated colour, as if the lovers were possessed of something sumptuous.

If Rozema's consummately 80s movie, *Mermaids*, has not dated well, it is perhaps because it raised issues of voyeurism, ownership and the appropriation of languages at the expense of characterisation. *Night's* characters on the other hand are much more rounded. This is a simple story of two women falling in love, but a deeper narrative can be easily gleaned from it. Rozema describes it as a retelling of the Cupid and Psyche myth, and she provides plenty of clues to support this. Camille is a mythology professor working within a Christian framework. She has the words *agape* and *eros* chalked on her classroom blackboard, a picture of the mythical lovers in her study. For Camille, one might therefore assume, love may be linked with faith.

But faith in what? In God? There are some extraordinary scenes that support this idea. Petra prays for Camille's deliverance. Then, after the death of the dog, Bob, comes his resurrection. It would be easy to conclude that this event indicated a belief in the redemptive power of love. It would be truer, in the circumstances of this film, however, to view love as the fundamental action that provides a sense of self for both Camille and Petra.

Louise Gray

NFT FIRST RUN

23h58

France 1993

Director: Pierre William Glenn

Certificate

Not yet issued

Distributor

BFI

Production Company

M.W. Productions with the participation of Canal +

Executive Producer

Martine Benveniste

Associate Producer

Martine Benveniste

Production Managers

Patrick Delauneux

Magali Potier

Olivier Fay-Keller

2nd Unit Director

Alain-Michel Blanc

Assistant Directors

Olivier P  ray

Gilles Baleziaux

Christophe Vall  e

Ameline Poisson

Screenplay

Pierre-William Glenn

Edith Vergne

Fr  d  ric Leroy

Continuity

Edith Vergne

Director of Photography

Jean-Claude Vicqu  ry

Camera Operators

Anne Kripounoff

Jean-Paul Rosa Da Costa

Pascal Genesseeux

R  my Chevrin

Steadicam Operator

Jean-Marc Bringui  r

WesCam Aerial Camera

System Operator

Derek Lovie

Editor

Anita Perez

Production Designer

Jacques Voizot

Storyboard Artist

Jean-Marie Lhomme

Special Effects

Philippe Alleton

Costume Design

Magali Guidasci

Make-up

Sylvia Carissoli

C  dric G  rard

Music

Laurent Cuny

Songs/Music Extracts

"While My Lady Sleeps" by G. Kahn,

B. Kaper, performed by John Coltrane;

"Florence's Theme" by Pierre Bosch  ron,

Vincent Glenn

Sound

Jean-Marcel Milan

Fran  ois Groult

Henri Roux

Adrien Nataf

Bruno Tarr  re

Sound Effects

J  r  me L  vy

Pascal Mazi  re

Eric Ferret

Motorbike Advisers

G  rald Garnier

Jean Lallan

Stunt Co-ordinators

Dominique Hendrickx

Georges Zsiga

Cast

Jean-Fran  ois Stevenin

Bernard

Jean-Pierre Malo

Superintendent

Steve Morin

G  rald Garnier

Thierry

Yan Epstein

Inspector Jean-Marie

Kader Boukanef

Momo-La-D  merde

Am  lie Glenn

Florence

Jean-Charles Frappin

Little Boy

Sophie Tellier

Didi

Isabelle Maltese

Inspector Bertrand

Pierre-Octave Arrighi

Inspector Mathieu

Emmanuel Pinda

Charles Delamour

(Florist)

Georges Zsiga

Georges Dumais

(Karateka)

Jean-Jacques Birod

Caf   Patron

Richard Dieux

Fran  ck Marceau

(Stadium Official)

Pierre Bolle

Herv   (Motorcyclist)

Michelle Outerbah

Gilles (Motorcyclist

who Falls)

Olivier de La Caroulaye

Course Commentator

Laurent Aubujeau

Laurent Dubureau

(Stuntman)

Ben Feitelson

Georges' Adversary

Bernard Cardocq

Helicopter Pilot

Val  rie Aberman

Arrested Woman

Pedro Marquez

Man Under

Interrogation

Patrick Raouli

Black CRS Man

Daniel J  gou

Angry Spectator

Luc Tessier d'Orfeuil

Policeman

Isabelle Touzet

Accountant

Jacques Gouin

Accounts Security Man

Yves Belluardo

Doctor on Duty

Gilles Baleziaux

Nurse on Duty

Richard Ramade

Club President

Olivier B  nard

Patrick (Driver

at Pit Stop)

Michel Cury

Mechanic at Pit Stop

Ameline Peisson

Didi's Friend

Catherine Leroy

Herv  's Friend

Martine Chide

Nurse

7,650 feet

85 minutes

In colour

Subtitles

erately falls off his bike, the crooked stadium security chief Frank and an ambulance driver, the duo succeed in securing the money. However, they remain trapped inside the stadium while a police squad, led by Superintendent Steve Morin, combs the area. Hiding some of the money in one of the racer's rest caravans, Bernard and Thierry split up.

Didi, a circus acrobat and wife of the injured rider, fingers Thierry to the cops after her husband dies in hospital. Meanwhile, George and Charles search the caravan, but are confronted by the Steve's callous colleague Jean-Marie and shot dead. One bag of money bursts on the race track and the ambulance driver is killed by a motorbike as he attempts to retrieve it. Jean-Marie subsequently shoots Thierry – whose gun turns out to be a cigarette lighter.

Steve, aware now that the robbery is based on *The Killing*, meets Bernard by chance in a stadium bar. Realising that the one-time champion biker is the culprit, Steve takes the remaining loot, but then gives it back and allows him to leave the stadium – receiving a video cassette of *The Killing* in exchange. Taking Thierry's bike, Bernard travels to the coast where he meets Florence the young daughter of a biker friend killed several years before. Bernard tells her that they can now embark on his long-promised around the world trip.

Stanley Kubrick's 1956 thriller *The Killing* is a near-flawless film about a group of deeply flawed characters. Marked by a mood of overwhelming pessimism, the film's most notable feature is its bold use of multiple flashbacks in which the story of a doomed racetrack heist is recounted from several points of view. An explicit homage, *23h58* is also concerned with time, but here the emphasis is very different. Where Kubrick's film detailed petty greed, jealousies and misjudgement, Pierre-William Glenn aims rather to celebrate his protagonists' movie and bike-obsessed idealism.

Glenn adopts a straightforward narrative in which the linear (in time terms) racetrack action is framed by the simple recollective technique of the little girl, Florence, reading Bernard's letter. Her idyllic scenes on the seashore also feature a toy motorbike, a deliberately infantile piece of symbolism which at once suggests the transitory nature of human endeavour and the bright, uncomplicated essence of a child's imagination – a world which both Bernard and the movie-obsessed cop Steve wish to escape back into.

Unlike Kubrick, who gave near-equal time to all of his gang members, Glenn is mainly interested in Bernard and Steve. The other crooks are little more than ciphers who mechanically advance the plot. And whereas, in *The Killing*, Marie Windsor's slatternly femme fatale dominates the screen, here the comparable character, Didi, is only a minor player. Bernard and Steve are virtually mirror images of each other: both are fans of *The Killing*, one is a one-time motorbike champion who's

still attempting to make his dreams come true and the other a bike and movie buff ("You're all I wanted to be," he says at the end) who has compromised his early biker hero aspirations to become a cop.

Steve tells us that he's named after Steve McQueen, and those viewers who are unfamiliar with McQueen's 1971 car racing movie *Le Mans*, will at least recall the indelible image of McQueen, astride his motorbike in *The Great Escape*. It's that kind of ideal marriage of mesmerising movie image and identity-fixing action moment which *23h58* aims to celebrate. The film's very title – derived from the fact that because the crowd invade the track, the last lap of the race is never run – suggests an immutable moment of triumph of the kind that generations of sporting champions have insisted "can never be taken away from you." In Kubrick's film, time is presented as a trap which envelops and defeats its characters.

Of course, there's a major difference between remaking *The Killing* in terms of repeating the fate of its characters and honouring it as a movie showcase. Glenn adopts the latter course and obviously isn't at all interested in duplicating Kubrick's film thematically. Instead, he remembers the movie as a spectator of a great sporting event might fondly remember that event, as a privileged highlight from one's past.

Related to this, Glenn makes much of the *idea* of the race. In the Kubrick film the horse race is really quite incidental. Here, Bernard's history as a top racer and Steve's admiration of him serve to express both the fixing of an heroic identity and the process of enjoying sport and the movies as spectacle. That forced marriage is the thematic core of the film and, crucially, Steve, who confesses to be a big fan of *The Killing*, is also the key spectator of Bernard's actions as they unfold. The director's purpose in incorporating stills from *The Killing* at various points seems to be to celebrate Cinema as a repository of perfect memories – and it's significant that the way in which they are interpolated into the drama makes it impossible to work out in whose head they're supposed to originate: the director's, Steve's, Bernard's, or all three.

Steve and Bernard live more in their imaginations than in the real world. The lesser characters are doomed not because of personal flaws but because of their lack of love of movies and motorbikes. Glenn is relentlessly upbeat about what, in the ideal worlds of sport and the movies, is possible – even if only for a moment. Kubrick's film was fundamentally about anti-heroes, but in *23h58* heroism is alive and well. Hence the choice of a happy ending. The film's accomplished night-for-night shooting and its overall glossy sheen add to its reflective aura. But, in being so keen to celebrate his two key characters' cosy delight in their own idealism, Glenn sacrifices almost all the sense of sleazy detail and claustrophobic character conflict which helped make the Kubrick film so compelling.

Tom Tunney

Mark Kermode and Geoffrey Macnab highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the retail and rental releases

VIDEO CHOICE

Clerks

Kevin Smith/USA 1994

Kevin Smith's low-budget debut feature received a rapturous reception from film festival audiences and is one of the most impressive examples of recent independent film-making. Two suburban misfits, Dante and Randal, spend a day running a convenience store and neighbouring video store respectively. In between abusing the customers, disrupting a funeral service, playing hockey on the store's roof and sending an ex-girlfriend into catatonic shock, the boys discuss the real issues of life such as who built the Death Star in *Return of the Jedi*?; how many blow jobs equals one fuck?; and just what exactly is hermaphroditic porn? Boasting blistering dialogue which turns the air blue, *Clerks* must rate as the rudest film ever made without resorting to on-screen sex or nudity. Right-on sensibilities may be offended by the shamelessly grotesque observations of our heroes, but for those with an open mind, filth doesn't come any funnier. (S&S May 1995)

● Rental: Artificial Eye; Certificate 18



Job lot: Jeff Anderson, Marilyn Chigliotti and Brian O'Halloran in 'Clerks'



Romantic agony: Johnny Depp

Don Juan DeMarco

Jeremy Leven/USA 1995

Thanks to his roles in films such as *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, Johnny Depp has shown himself to be one of Hollywood's finest young actors. In this whimsical romantic comedy he indulges in a little light relief. Depp stars as a young casanova who is brought to the attention of a world weary psychiatrist (Marlon Brando) after his lovestruck antics begin to border on madness. A rib-tickling battle of wills follows as Depp challenges Brando to prove that he is not, as he claims, the world's most notorious lover. Making the most of an intriguing premise and gorgeously sexy, satirical dialogue, Depp emerges as a charismatic, bona fide comic talent. Brando is in good form tripping gracefully (despite his now preposterous girth) through the role of cynical shrink, and Faye Dunaway lends mature appeal. (S&S June 1995)

● Rental: EVV; Certificate 15

Speechless

Ron Underwood/USA 1994

An endearing screwball romantic comedy about a blossoming affair between two political speech writers. Geena Davis is an independent woman with a strong social conscience who falls for the wily charms of ex-sitcom writer Michael Keaton, before learning that he now pens flippant soundbites for the opposition. Can the lovers overcome their professional and political differences? Directed in sprightly fashion by the under-rated Ron

Underwood, *Speechless* may be flawed but it exudes an irrepressible sense of fun, largely due to the charm of its central players. Davis and Keaton make an affable wisecracking team who generate genuine warmth and intimacy. Strong support from the other players completes the picture.

● Rental Premiere: MGM/UA; Certificate 12; 94 minutes; Producers Renny Harlin, Geena Davis; Screenplay Robert King; Lead Actors Geena Davis, Michael Keaton, Bonnie Bedelia, Ernie Hudson, Christopher Reeve

Le Colonel Chabert

Yves Angelo/France 1994

A grizzled, badly dressed man smelling of horses turns up at the lawyer Derville's offices where it is assumed that he is a disgruntled coachman. However, the man insists he is Colonel Chabert, a heroic cavalry officer presumed to have died at the battle of Eylau. With its fussy design and costumes, and a narrative concerning a *Bleak House*-style legal tangle, this adaptation of the Balzac novel seems the stuff of conventional heritage cinema. The film opens with an interminable tracking shot across a battlefield and trumps that with an even

lengthier shot through the rooms of a chateau. All this visual detail is slightly suffocating, and echoes from earlier movies and performances are a further distraction. (Watching Gérard Depardieu protest his identity, it's hard not to be reminded of *The Return of Martin Guerre*, and the presence of Fanny Ardant inevitably recalls *The Woman Next Door*.) However, the is-he-or-isn't-he an imposter story remains compelling, and the three central performances (especially Fabrice Luchini as the weasel-like but kindly lawyer) animate matters, even when the direction does not. (S&S May 1995)

● Retail: FoxVideo; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15



Polar opposites: Fabrice Luchini, Gérard Depardieu

All About Eve

Joseph L. Mankiewicz/USA 1950

"In essence a play fabricated into celluloid with absolutely no pictorial style or form," was *Sight & Sound's* verdict at the time. The critic is right; this isn't a movie characterised by sweeping crane movements, and writer/director Mankiewicz was always wont to privilege the tart, witty one-liner over the striking image. The film is memorable for its star's physiognomy alone – Bette Davis with her curdled lips and hollow eyes applying cold cream to her face in the dressing room as she meets her fan-cum-nemesis, Eve (Anne Baxter), for the first

time, is worth any amount of chicanery. Also, one would be hard pressed to find a richer soundtrack, with the cutaways and mawkish music used in a highly ironic fashion to signpost the fact Eve is not the angel she seems. George Sanders as the critic Addison de Witt, displays an unsurpassable mellowness of sneer; there's a brilliant little comic cameo from Marilyn Monroe as a starlet on the make; and Davis' acid delivery of Mankiewicz's sometimes corny dialogue ("I'll admit I've seen better days, but I'm still not to be had for the price of a cocktail like a salted peanut") is a delight. (MFB No. 204)

● Retail: FoxVideo; £12.99; B/W; Certificate U

The Firm

Alan Clarke/UK 1989

Presumably, this infamous slice of British television history which stars Gary Oldman and Philip Davis is reissued due to the interest in Davis' latest film (which he directed), i. d.. Gary Oldman is terrific as a middle-class executive who spends his leisure time leading a gang of football hooligans into increasingly bitter clashes with rival gangs. Drawing the audience

into the same violent excitement which intoxicates the film's anti-heroes, *The Firm* deserves the controversial reputation which it has acquired over the years. Top-notch script writing by Alan Hunter (who is clearly intimate with the milieu he writes about) lends genuine depth.

● Rental Premiere: Imagine; Certificate 18; 78 minutes; Producer David M. Thompson; Screenplay Alan Hunter; Lead Actors Gary Oldman, Leslie Manville, Philip Davis



Lost soul: Edith Scob

Les Yeux sans visage (Eyes without a Face)

Georges Franju/France 1959

Franju's mesmerising horror pic about a Bluebeard-like professor who lures a young student to his mansion-cum-laboratory so he can transplant her face onto his disfigured daughter, sometimes seems more like a stylised cinematic ballet than a conventional genre piece. (The scenes in which the masked daughter roams through the house like a lost soul is reminiscent of the choreography of Pina Bausch.) Characters take their tempo from Maurice Jarre's whirling, barrel organ-style score; the exaggerated way that birds twitter and dogs bark adds to the nightmarish quality of the story, as does Eugen Schufftan's pellucid cinematography. As in the Dali sequences in Hitchcock's *Spellbound*, the images are crisp and clear. Franju, as if in emulation of his sinister professor hero, grafts highbrow themes and symbolism onto what is in essence a pulp story. It makes for a fascinating, if somewhat chilling collision between art house and popular cinema. (MFB No. 314)

● Retail: Connoisseur Video; £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate 18

Elmer Gantry

Richard Brooks/USA 1960

Mountebank and failed salesman turned revivalist preacher, Elmer Gantry is a quintessentially American figure. His Christian faith is simply an extension of his showmanship and capitalist endeavour; he sells God in the same way he does hoovers and toasters to small-town store owners. As played by the Oscar-winning Burt Lancaster in Brooks' adaptation of the Sinclair Lewis novel, he comes across as an engaging scoundrel, infinitely more sympathetic than either the sneering, sceptical, H. L. Mencken-style journalist (Arthur Kennedy) or the pious churchmen who disapprove of his populist methods. *Gantry* doesn't seem as shocking as it perhaps once was (a brief note in the opening credits warns "due to the highly controversial nature of this film, we strongly recommend you to prevent impressionable children from seeing it"), but it still carries a satirical bite, and Jean Simmons' quiet intensity as Sister Sharon complements Lancaster's outrageous bluster. (MFB No. 325)

● Retail: MGM/UA; £9.99; Certificate PG



Word up: Burt Lancaster



A hard place: Richard Attenborough in 'Brighton Rock'

Brighton Rock

John Boulting/UK 1947

Every bit as nasty as any Warner Bros gangster pic, this vivid thriller none the less remains rooted in British experience. The initial action unfolds over a bank holiday and is set in typically English pubs, boarding houses and cafes. The hoodlums, from William Hartnell's spivish old-timer to Richard Attenborough's ingenuous but psychopathic Pinkie, owe as much of

a debt to Dickensian archetypes as they do to George Raft, Humphrey Bogart et al. The chase of Kolly Kibber across town is a tour de force of fluid, exhilarating filmmaking and easily stands comparison with Carol Reed's mannered, over praised sewer sequence in *The Third Man*. Its sheer virtuosity makes the Boulting Brothers' subsequent decline into limp satire of the *I'm All Right Jack* variety seem all the more dispiriting. (MFB No. 168)

● Retail: Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG

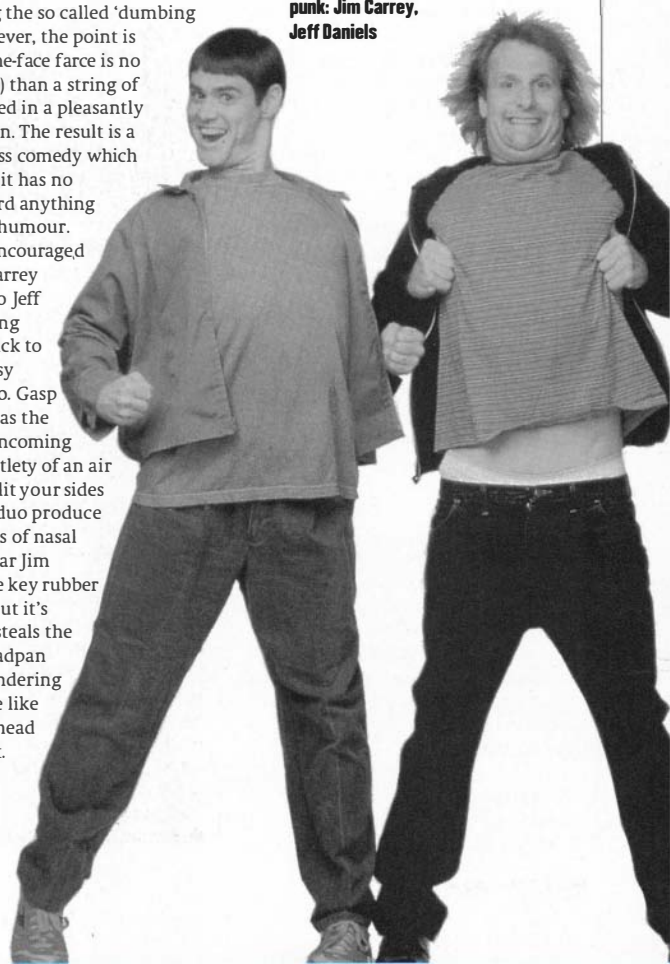
Dumb and Dumber

Peter Farrelly/USA 1994

This movie provoked a slew of learned articles regarding the so called 'dumbing of America'. However, the point is Farrelly's pie-in-the-face farce is no more (and no less) than a string of fart gags assembled in a pleasantly haphazard fashion. The result is a brainless, graceless comedy which succeeds because it has no pretensions toward anything other than toilet humour. The audience is encouraged to laugh as Jim Carrey slips laxatives into Jeff Daniels' tea causing the hapless sidekick to spend several noisy minutes in the loo. Gasp with amazement as the director signals oncoming gags with the subtlety of an air raid siren, and split your sides as the delightful duo produce copious quantities of nasal fluid. Big name star Jim Carrey gets all the key rubber faced set-pieces, but it's Jeff Daniels who steals the show with his deadpan performance, wandering through the piece like a man out of his head on prozac. A treat. (S&S April 1995)

● Rental: First Independent; Certificate 12

White dopes on punk: Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels



Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Camilla

Deepa Mehta, Canada/UK 1993; EV; Certificate 12

Singer-songwriter Freda (Bridget Fonda) hitchhikes up with Camilla (Jessica Tandy), an eccentric ageing musician. The pair hit the road in an attempt to put Freda's miserable relationship behind her and to rekindle an old flame of Camilla's. Passable, whimsical fare which gained notoriety for its fleeting glimpse of Tandy baring all in the sea. (S&S March 1995)

Death and the Maiden

Roman Polanski; USA/France 1994; PolyGram; Certificate 18

A perhaps unsurprisingly stagey adaptation of the acclaimed theatre hit to which Polanski fails to bring any truly cinematic dimension. Sigourney Weaver is oddly out of her depth as the survivor



'Little Women': Winona Ryder, right

of hideous political torture who captures and abuses the man she believes to be her former tormentor. Ben Kingsley fares better as the prisoner who suffers with baffled aplomb. (S&S April 1995)

Drop Zone

John Badham; USA 1994, Paramount; Certificate 12

Action maestro Badham's free falling romp scores no points for coherence or plausibility. Yet it features enough footage of people jumping out of aeroplanes to more than compensate for any narrative shortcomings. US Marshal Wesley Snipes teams up with lithe beauty Yancy Butler in order to defeat the evil Gary Busey. Watch it with a six-pack. (S&S April 1995)

Exit to Eden

Garry Marshall; USA 1994; Guild; Certificate 18
An appallingly misjudged bawdy comedy which leaves you wondering how such bankable box-office names (Dan Aykroyd, Rosie O'Donnell, Garry Marshall) ever agreed to participate. Two undercover policeman travel to Eden Island where S&M weirdos experience around-the-clock exotic services. Whips are cracked but, alas, funny jokes are not. (S&S August 1995)

A Feast at Midnight

Justin Hardy; UK/Japan 1994; EV; Certificate PG
Hardy's pleasantly diverting kids' pic is a

nostalgic throwback to the days of the Children's Film Foundation. At a posh English boarding school a group of misfit children pool their culinary skills to form the Scoffers Club and indulge in lavish midnight feasts. Made with Japanese investment, this benefits from Christopher Lee's nicely nasty performance as an ogre-like headmaster. A very English snack which exceeds its admirably small ambitions. (S&S July 1995)

Legends of the Fall

Edward Zwick; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar; Certificate 15

Hyperbolic melodrama which soon turns ludicrous. An American family is torn apart by a tempestuous woman (Julia Ormond). Brad Pitt rips open his shirt and beats his chest; Aidan Quinn grits his teeth and attempts to retain a straight face; and Anthony Hopkins gives a pantomime performance, playing the disabled father like Long John Silver on mescaline. A hoot. (S&S May 1995) □

The Little Rascals

Penelope Spheeris; USA 1994; Universal; Certificate U

What on earth has happened to director Penelope Spheeris? From *Wayne's World* to *The Beverly Hillbillies* to this baffling update of the bratty children's matinee series from days of yore – it seems as if no-one is managing her career. Someone should also tell her that names such as Spanky and Porky don't translate well to the rude 90s. (S&S April 1995)

Little Women

Gillian Armstrong; USA 1994; 20.20; Certificate U

A surprisingly passionate rendering of Louisa May Alcott's novel which strikes a powerful emotional chord. Winona Ryder and Susan Sarandon lead a crop of fine ensemble performances, but the real success is director Gillian Armstrong, who puts tasty cinematic meat on the bones of Robin Swicord's succinct script. A treat for little men and women alike. (S&S March 1995)

The Mangler

Tobe Hooper; USA 1994; Guild; Certificate 18
The worst Tobe Hooper movie since *Spontaneous Combustion*, this schlock-fest proves that the wonderful *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was just a lucky blip in an otherwise uninspiring career. A twisted and corrupt laundry owner (Robert Englund) feeds his clothes-press with human sacrifices. From a short story by Stephen King, who is doubtless less than eager to take credit. (S&S July 1995)

Milk Money

Richard Benjamin; USA 1994; Paramount; Certificate 12

A particularly pernicious and vile movie. A group of schoolboys save up their pocket money to visit a prostitute (Melanie Griffith). They then attempt to pair her off with the father of one of the boys. Pluck out your eyes rather than watch this. (S&S May 1995)

Nell

Michael Apted, USA 1994; PolyGram; Certificate 12

Sentimental claptrap which reduced audiences to floods of tears and had critics spouting weedy adjectives such as "delightful" and "heartwarming". Jodie



Girls on the move: Jessica Tandy in 'Camilla'

Foster won an obligatory Oscar nomination for her overwrought interpretation of an innocent wild woman who blathers in her own Nell-speak. Liam Neeson and Natasha Richardson are awful as sensitive souls who come to her aid. Forrestry gump! (S&S March 1995) □

Once Were Warriors

Lee Tamahori; New Zealand 1994; EV; Certificate 18

Tamahori's powerful depiction of urban brutality in a ravaged New Zealand suburb clearly struck an Antipodean cord – it was a huge hit in Australia, and in New Zealand it outgrossed *Jurassic Park*. Despite its impressive cinematic virtues (strong performances, muscular direction, evocative locations), it is perhaps too aggressive for its own good, rubbing the audience's face in domestic violence in a manner often too relentless to be accessible. A film of uncontrolled rage which hits only some of its targets. (S&S April 1995)

Pret-a-Porter (Ready to Wear)

Robert Altman; USA 1994; Touchstone; Certificate 18

Hot on the heels of Altman's marvellous *Short Cuts* comes this shambolic, indulgent scrapbook which fails to do for the world of fashion what *The Player* did for Hollywood. A group of boring people gather in Paris to bitch about clothes designers. Celebrity nudity and a lovable star turn from the wonderful Richard E Grant fails to salvage the piece. (S&S March 1995) □

Rental premiere

Before the Night

Talia Shire; USA 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 93 minutes; Producer Alida Camp; Screenplay Marty Casella, Lead Actors Ally Sheedy, A. Martinez, Frederick Forrester
Rather strangely, Francis Ford Coppola lends his name to this upmarket erotic thriller which treads a thin line between art house and exploitation. A lonely advertising executive (Ally Sheedy) enjoys a night of passion with a mysterious stranger (Martinez – nice body, shame about the hair). Marty Casella's script relies heavily on philosophical intrigue, but Shire's direction of the erotic moments veers dangerously toward Zalman King territory – billowy sheets, wailing music and candles. Not without charm, but unsatisfying.

Deadly Nightshade

Peter Levin; USA 1994; Guild; Certificate 18; 97 minutes; Producer Lisa Richardson; Screenplay Eric Blakeney; Lead Actors Lindsay Wagner, Piper Laurie, Renee Humphrey, Chad Lowe
By-numbers, true life trauma vehicle in which a young girl (Renee Humphrey) is lead astray by her pimp boyfriend, forcing her mother to take serious action. Not quite as awful as it sounds, this piece of trashy 'issue-tainment' receives a lift from Chad Lowe's wonderfully horrid turn as the sleazy boyfriend and Renee Humphrey's convincingly annoying



Revisiting the ancestors: Julian Arahanga in 'Once Were Warriors'

'Little Women' screenwriter Robin Swicord on 'All About Eve'

Blonde ambition

All About Eve, Joseph Mankiewicz's poison-pen valentine to show business, opens with newcomer actress Eve Harrington (Anne Baxter) about to receive the prestigious Sara Siddons Award. As the MC rhapsodises about Eve's "abiding love for us and what we are," our narrator, critic Addison de Witt (George Sanders), stealthily watches his companions. The playwright's wife, Karen Richards (Celeste Holm) remains poised, but ageing theatrical star Margo Channing (Bette Davis) lowers her eyes, signalling her clear loathing. Lovely Eve rises demurely and Addison de Witt intones, "Eve, Eve, the golden girl... the girl next door. You know all about Eve. But what can there be to know that you *don't* know?"

Impossibly, from that slender narrative question hangs a spider's web of plot. As the trophy is placed in Eve's outstretched arms, something striking happens: the film's point-of-view passes effortlessly from the critic to Karen, who picks up the narration, "When was it? How long ago...?" Unlike most films, *All About Eve* does not suspend itself from "Will the protagonist succeed?", but takes the more provocative line, "How does she succeed?" Because we know where the story is going this brilliant comedy unfolds with the sensibility of tragedy, propelled along by acrobatic shifts of point-of-view. Movies are usually relentless in their pursuit of a single confining viewpoint. The exception is the thriller genre where shifting away from the protagonist to the antagonist creates tension: things can happen behind our backs while we're not looking. Mankiewicz employs these techniques in *All About Eve*. By turns we inhabit each charmingly flawed character, never taking Eve's point-of-view but always circling around her – all about Eve.

As the narration is handed off to Karen, the action transfers to nine months before when she spots rain-soaked young Eve hovering outside the backstage door waiting for a glimpse of her idol, Margo. Karen escorts Eve to Margo's dressing room and before long Eve has won Margo over with her story of woe and pluck. The narrator's voice seamlessly becomes Margo's as she takes Eve under her wing. Our first inkling that Eve is more stalker than fan comes when Margo is making her bows. We break point-of-view to wait in the wings, watching Eve's face as she looks on with fascination and envy. Then we move with Margo from centre stage to backstage to encounter Eve in tears. "Again?" Margo preens, and Eve sniffs "I could watch you play that last scene a thousand times, and cry every time."

In that moment we know that Eve's idolisation of Margo is as false as her tears. But it isn't long before Margo wises up. She surprises Eve trying Margo's costume in a mirror. Margo lets Eve indulge her fantasy, then calls gently "Eve." She turns, startled, and her teeth are involuntarily bared. What Eve wants and what she will do to get it are on full



Snakes alive: George Sanders, Anne Baxter

display. From this moment, Margo sees Eve's exquisitely plotted machinations played out among every member of her inner circle. When will the others come to know Eve's true nature?, becomes the subtextual question driving the narrative.

Amusingly, de Witt recognises Eve at once, "killer to killer." He is *persona non grata* in Margo's inner circle. "I distinctly remember crossing you off the guest list" is Margo's welcome when Addison arrives at her party. "Dear Margo, you were an unforgettable Peter Pan, you must play it again soon," is Addison's stinging reply, which strikes directly at Margo's secret fear of becoming a has-been. In this backstage paradise – or "jungle" as the screenplay points out repeatedly – Addison (adder's son, the wit) is the snake in the garden. "The theatre is all the religions of the world rolled into one, and we're gods and goddesses," Margo mocks. Not content with his lowly role as voyeur/destroyer, de Witt aspires to be a star-maker, a creator – like Eve, he wants to be a god, he wants to belong.

The proscenium-like party scene launches the remaining action, for here not only are de Witt and Eve brought together, but Lloyd Richards and Margo quarrel about her role in his new play, and Margo admits her true age ("Forty. Four-O"). Here Eve extracts a promise from Karen to help her become Margo's understudy, even as Margo rids herself of Eve by forcing theatre producer Max Fabian to make her his secretary; and Karen becomes fed up with her friend's insecure egotism – which will lead Karen to play a "harmless prank" that helps place Margo's career in Eve's hands. It is also here that director Bill Sampson speaks to Mankiewicz's central theme – *female ambition*. "To be an actress requires a concentration of desire, ambition and sacrifice such as no other profession demands," he philosophises, as the camera gazes squarely into Eve's face.

"Eve Evil, little Miss Evil," Margo

bitterly opines and in fact in the Judeo-Christian creation myth that Mankiewicz explores, woman is evil. What exactly was Eve's crime that deserved so much punishment? When Eve attempts to seduce Bill Sampson, he rebuffs her: "What I go after, I want to go after, I don't want it to go after me." It isn't carnality Bill dislikes, it's Eve's forwardness. Eve's transgression isn't sexuality but hubris – the original Eve was an over-reaching female who challenged God's authority. Both the biblical myth and Mankiewicz's film go after women's ambition with an appetite. *All About Eve* was released post-war in 1950, when working women were experiencing pressure to give up their jobs to returning soldiers. "Funny business, a woman's career," Margo laments, "the things you drop on your way up the ladder... you forget you'll need them again when you get back to being a woman." Margo's reformation means working less and weeping more, marrying her lover and staying home.

All About Eve is so wonderfully entertaining and Mankiewicz's affection for Margo is so evident, we manage to adore the film in spite of its subliminal theme. At the end we are at last allowed to inhabit Eve's point of view when Miss Harrington returns to her hotel after the awards ceremony, where she finds a high school girl who heads the Eve Harrington Fan Club in Brooklyn. "A lot of actresses come from Brooklyn," the girl points out. Within 60 seconds she has told Eve a material lie and is secretly posing in a panelled mirror in Eve's jewelled cloak, holding Eve's trophy. The mirrors multiply the young girl hundreds of times in an image meant to be both ironic and terrifying: *The world is full of unscrupulous women like Eve, who will stop at nothing to fulfill themselves.*

If you find yourself rooting for the girl, you've survived the film's secret message. 'All About Eve' is released by FoxVideo

petulant teenage scowl. Not sure about Lindsay Wagner's red rinse, though.

Lilly in Winter

Delbert Mann; USA 1994; Universal; Certificate PG; 89 minutes; Producer Anthony Santa Croce; Screenplay Robert Eisle; Lead Actors Natalie Cole, Brian Bonsall, Marla Gibbs
Singer Natalie Cole gives a passable performance in this innocuous film which deals with the familiar theme of racism in 50s America. A nanny is suspected of kidnap when she takes flight with her under-aged charge following an unwitting brush with crime. Nice cars and a pleasant enough script.

Love Affair

Glenn Gordon Caron; USA 1994; Warner; Certificate 12; 103 minutes; Producer Warren Beatty; Screenplay Robert Towne, Warren Beatty; Lead Actors Warren Beatty, Annette Bening, Katharine Hepburn, Garry Shandling, Chloe Webb, Pierce Brosnan
An overblown vanity project for real life couple Warren Beatty and Annette Bening. A remake of *An Affair to Remember* (itself a remake) but without the magical charm of the 1957 version. Two beautiful star-crossed people, betrothed to others, spend time together on a Russian cruise ship with predictably heart wrenching results. Annette Bening sports some nice frocks, Katharine Hepburn is wheeled out in a clumsy nod to the golden age of cinema, and Pierce Brosnan looks like he is anxiously waiting for a call from the Bond producers.

The Matriarch

Luca Bercovici; USA 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 86 minutes; Producers Sam Bernard, Natan Zahavi; Screenplay Luca Bercovici; Lead Actors Stella Stevens, Shannon Whirry, Kendal Schmidt
Frightful horror-comedy mishmash which seems to have been cobbled together from at least two disparate sources. In a pre-credit sequence, a possessed girl trips quickly through the usual *Exorcist* party tricks. It then switches to a mansion in which a rich, decrepit woman returns from the dead to torment her horrid family. Of note for the fact that Shannon Whirry keeps her bra on most of the time, and a memorable death by fellatio sequence.

Project Shadowchaser:

Beyond the Edge of Darkness

John Eyres; USA 1994; Medusa; Certificate 18; 94 minutes; Producers John Eyres, Gregory Vanger, Shari Lanes Bowles, Paul Eyres; Screenplay Nick Davies; Lead Actors Sam Bottoms, Musetta Vander, Christopher Athens
More derivative sci-fi romps from the rentable *Shadowchaser* series. When a satellite in orbit around Mars is struck by a spaceship, a shapeshifting alien makes light work of the crew. The results are predictable.

Stranger by Night

Gregory H. Brown; USA 1994; High Fliers; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producer Andre Garroni; Screenplay Daryl Hanly; Lead Actors Steven Bauer, Jennifer Rubin, William Katt, Michael Parks, Michael Greene
Now, this is more like it – an unabashed slice of senseless entertainment from legendary hardcore director Greg Dark (hiding behind one of his many mainstream pseudonyms). The plot (a hot-tempered detective haunted by blackouts, begins to suspect that he is

responsible for the murder of several hookers) provides ample opportunity to indulge in the usual clichés: multiple suspects, a sexy psychiatrist, a sadistic partner, psychological intrigue, and black stockings. It is utter rubbish, of course, and the dénouement is preposterous, but Brown conducts the piece with enough trashy aplomb to keep the smiles coming. Thumbs up.

Retail

Angi Vera

Pál Gábor; Hungary 1978; Art House; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

An 18-year-old nurse denounces the corruption and squalor in the hospital where she works, thereby attracting the attention of the local Communist Party officials who send her on a six month political re-education course. Gábor's sombre melodrama, set in Hungary in 1948, expertly catches the confusion its young heroine feels as she tries to balance her emotions with her political ideals. Gábor doesn't make grand statements about a repressive regime, but hones in on the plight of an individual forced to act in bad faith. This quiet, understated quality ultimately makes the satire all the more biting. (MFB No. 558)

The Angry Silence

Guy Green; UK 1960; Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG

Loaded political drama with a Bryan Forbes script that stacks the dice in favour of a decent, home-loving strike breaker (pluckily played by Richard Attenborough) while demonising naughty union members who insist on mounting violent pickets outside the factory gates. A sinister agitator – a bespectacled, weedy type who looks the spitting image of Colin Wilson – is responsible for spreading dissent among the workers. The editing is occasionally crudely literal (when somebody talks about a “storm in a teacup” there's an immediate cut to a tea cup), the dialogue creaks (“there's no use in behaving like a party of shocked parsons at a dirty postcard convention”), and Michael Craig's performance as a teddy boy and would-be Marlon Brando is a shocker. (MFB No. 315)

The Client

Joel Schumacher; USA 1994; Warner Home Video; £14.99; Certificate 15 (S&S November 1994) □

Companeros

Sergio Corbucci; Italy/Spain/West Germany 1970; Art House; £10.99; Certificate 18

Tremendously entertaining spaghetti Western with an infectious Ennio Morricone score and a wry, self-mocking performance from Franco Nero as a Swedish gunrunner, Yod Peterson. He turns up in war-torn Mexico, in blazer and straw hat, and is straightaway dubbed “the penguin” by the outlaw leader. Whether he's buried up to his neck in sand and about to be trampled by stampeding horses, or perched on a barrel with a noose around his neck and a hawk waiting to gnaw him, he remains quite unflappable. Jack Palance, looking remarkably like former England football manager Bobby Robson, enjoys himself as

Peterson's cape-wearing, one-handed ex-partner, American John. (MFB No. 457)

Cry the Beloved Country

Zoltan Korda; UK 1951; Lumiere; £9.99; B/W; Certificate PG

A village preacher visits Johannesburg, determined to persuade his sister and his son to return home to the countryside. He discovers the sister has become a prostitute and after a long search for the son learns that he has just been released from the reformatory, but is now suspected of murdering the child of a white farmer. This adaptation of Alan Paton's novel is a solemn, dignified affair with a lugubrious tempo, but in its way immensely moving.

The Dam Busters/The Cruel Sea

Michael Anderson/Charles Frend; UK 1954/1953; Warner Home Video; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG

It's easy enough to dismiss the first of this double-bill as stiff-upper lip peddling jingoistic nonsense. However, if you overlook all the palaver about bouncing bombs and try to ignore Richard Todd's offensive name for his labrador, this emerges as much more ambivalent film than might at first be supposed. Michael Redgrave is typically intense as the anguished, duffle-coat wearing scientist who designs the bomb after experimenting with ping pong balls. The second, directed by Charles Frend in semi-documentary style and starring Jack Hawkins as a fierce British navy captain pitted against the scourge of German U-boats, hasn't dated in the slightest. It remains one of Ealing's finest non-comedies. (MFB Nos. 257/232)

Devils of Darkness

Lance Comford; UK 1965; Art House; £12.99; Certificate 18

Humdrum British horror pic about an English writer (William Sylvester) who stumbles on a local devil worshipping sect while on holiday in Brittany. Unusually for a British vampire film, it has a contemporary setting and boasts some nicely creepy location photography, but the plot and the characters are too familiar to make much impact. (MFB No. 381)

Devil Ship Pirates

Don Sharp; UK 1964; Lumiere; £10.99; Widescreen; Certificate PG

Lusty swashbuckler from the Hammer Studios. Christopher Lee exchanges black



Man alone: John Wayne in 'Hondo'

gown and fangs for a Spanish nobleman's outfit. He plays the fearsome captain of the galleon *Diablo*, a privateer that survives Drake's assault on the Armada and holes up in a small cove on the Cornish coast for repairs. The locals assume that Drake has been defeated, a belief that Lee is only too keen to reinforce. Jimmy Sangster's script bears more than a passing resemblance to *Went the Day Well*, but vivid widescreen cinematography and noisy performances (most of the cast seem to shout rather than speak their lines) atone for a flimsy plot. (MFB No. 381)

Hondo

John Farrow; USA 1953; VCI; £12.99; Certificate U

Released amid great fanfare (“The most sought after John Wayne film on video,” according to the publicity) this restored version of the quintessential Wayne Western has been selling like hot cakes in the US. Wayne's son claims it's the movie which best exemplified how the star “lived his life.” The storyline (frontier man gets into scrap with Apaches and falls in love with frontier woman) is old hat. Cinematographer Robert Burks' framing, with its emphasis on depth of focus, was clearly aimed at heightening the 3-D effect, but it looks a little odd without the magic specs. Wayne is his usual ornery, heroic self: “A woman should be a good cook,” he tells Geraldine



Murder most sweet: Gene Tierney in 'Leave Her to Heaven'

Page, “I'm a good cook myself” – but his character doesn't spend much time in the kitchen! (MFB No. 243)

Les Innocents aux main sales (Innocents with Dirty Hands)

Claude Chabrol; Germany/France/Italy 1975; Art House; £15.99; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 15

Baffling, multi-layered thriller which stars Romy Schneider as the bored wife of drunken, impotent Rod Steiger. After starting an affair with Paolo Giusti, she and her lover plot to get rid of the unwanted husband. Given Chabrol's track record, it's no surprise that there's an outrageous twist in the plot and what starts out as a conventional murder mystery soon gives way to intense psycho-drama. Steiger is impressive as the vengeful cuckold, but the poor dubbing is a distraction. (MFB No. 503)

The Lawman

Michael Winner; USA 1970; MGM/JA; £9.99; Certificate TBC

Dreary Western in which Michael Winner does his best to squander the kind of cast most directors would die for. Burt Lancaster is the lawman of the title, a rigid, inflexible sort determined to round up some gunslingers who accidentally killed an old man during a binge. Robert Ryan is the timorous Marshal from the neighbouring town, and Lee J. Cobb the boss of the cowboys Lancaster wants to arrest. While Gerald Wilson's script is less clear-cut than the average oater in its depiction of heroes and villains, there is nothing much in the director's treatment of the material to raise it above the ordinary. (MFB No. 447)

Leave Her to Heaven

John M. Stahl; USA 1945; FoxVideo; £12.99; Certificate U

Beautiful but jealous Gene Tierney will do anything (up to and including murder) to ensure that her husband Cornel Wilde pays attention to her. Giddy melodrama, shot in such lurid Technicolor that the cast are left looking like models from a wax museum. Not that this is a problem, if anything, it heightens the surreal, stylised quality of the movie. (MFB No. 146)

Mary Forever

Marco Risi; Italy 1988; Art House; £12.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

An idealistic teacher, waiting to be assigned to a prestigious high school job, takes a temporary post in a notoriously brutal Sicilian reform school and ends up trying to protect a transvestite prostitute from the attentions of the other inmates. This intense, naturalistic drama earned comparisons with the neo-realists when it first came out. As a study of disaffected youth, it is also akin to the searing, socially conscious dramas that Alan Clarke made in Britain in the 80s. Risi elicits plenty of anger and bad attitude from his young, mainly non-professional, cast. (S&S June 1991)

Renaissance Man

Penny Marshall; USA 1994; FoxVideo; £10.99; Certificate 12 (S&S August 1994)

La Route de Corinthe

Claude Chabrol; France/Italy/Greece 1967; Art House; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 12

When he learns too much about top-



FILM PRODUCTION

We believe the world is changing faster than anyone can imagine. That things are getting harder, not easier. We believe opportunity does not come in the form of a lottery ticket but through commitment, focus, self discipline, and the ability to work hard. We believe time is precious. That it is not enough to commit to change, one must commit to always changing.

Vancouver Film School has developed commercial production curriculums that are equal or superior to the best programs in the world. The difference is our programs take less time... a lot less.

**Full-time
Direct Education™ programs in:**

- Film Production ■ Classical Animation
- Portfolio Film Production ■ 3D Computer Animation
- Acting for Film & Television ■ Certified Alias Programs
- Multimedia Production ■ Certified Avid Programs

Call. Compare. Nothing does.



VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

1-800-661-4101

#400 - 1168 HAMILTON STREET, VANCOUVER, B.C. CANADA V6B 2S2



LEARN FILM MAKING

WRITE • DIRECT • SHOOT • EDIT

**YOUR OWN SHORT FILMS IN OUR HANDS-ON
INTENSIVE SIX-WEEK TOTAL IMMERSION
WORKSHOPS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH
NO PRIOR FILMMAKING EXPERIENCE.
SHOOT ON THE BACK LOT OF**

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

**USING 16MM ARRIFLEX CAMERAS
LEARN CONCEPTS OF STORY, DIRECTING,
LIGHTING, SOUND AND EDITING IN
SMALL CLASSES DESIGNED AND TAUGHT
BY AWARD-WINNING INSTRUCTORS.**

**ADDITIONAL WORKSHOPS START THE FIRST
MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH IN NEW YORK CITY**

TUITION US\$4000

**THIS WORKSHOP IS OWNED AND OPERATED SOLELY BY THE
NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY
100 EAST 17TH STREET NYC 10003 TEL: 212-674-4300 FAX: 212-477-1414**

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FILM?

**Chances are that we'll have a copy in our
library of over 10,000 titles.**

**Filmbank is the UK's largest distributor of feature films
on 16mm and video, from classic oldies to the latest
releases, and we want YOU to join the thousands of
current members who use our service regularly for
private, educational or film society use.**

WHY NOT RING US TODAY?!

- **start a film club**
- **host a movie classic evening**
- **hold special themed movie events**
- **host a film debate/symposium**
- **ideal for special occasions**

Now Booking:

**Ed Wood, Eat Drink Man Woman, Rob Roy
Heavenly Creatures, Once Were Warriors
Circle of Friends, Bullets Over Broadway
Leon, Bad Boys, Batman Forever
Six Degrees of Separation, Silent Fall**

**Filmbank Distributors Ltd, Grayton House,
498-504 Fulham Road, London, SW6 5NH
Tel. 0171 386 9909/5411**



© The Home Entertainment Corporation Plc. MCXCV

ALL THE VIDEOS YOU'VE THOUGHT OF OWNING, AND MANY YOU HAVEN'T

**Video Plus Direct is the video mail order
service with over 16,000 titles to choose from!**

**Feature Films . Children's . Sport .
Television Drama . Music - and many more
specialist titles you won't find in the shops.**

**In addition, our first
class service includes
advice and information
on titles, prompt, efficient
processing of your order
and guaranteed deliveries
direct to your door.**

For an exciting pre-

**VIDEO
PLUS
DIRECT**

**view of the enormous
video selection in our
16,000 titles mail order
catalogue, and to sample
our first class service,
send for your FREE
Autumn Video
Supplement - now.**

NOBODY SPECIALISES IN VIDEOS LIKE VIDEO PLUS DIRECT

CALL 01733 232800 FOR YOUR FREE AUTUMN VIDEO SUPPLEMENT

**Or complete this coupon and send it to
Video Plus Direct, Freeport (PE 564) Peterborough PE2 6BR**

Please rush me my FREE Video Plus Direct Autumn Video Supplement

Name.....Address.....

.....Postcode.....Tel No..... AVSS 1068

END NOTES

By Mark Kermode



Play it again: 'Carrington'

Michael Nyman's score for Christopher Hampton's lusty period drama *Carrington* could be called boisterous, portentous, hyperbolic, even intrusive – all these adjectives adequately describe the punchy, staccato strings and soaring, grief-laden violin swoops which accompany Hampton's strangely sexual psychodrama. While critical plaudits have been heaped on the director and cast for their work on the movie, Nyman's surging score has been singled out for softly muttered criticism. "Overbearing" was the word most banded around following a press screening which I recently attended. One of the film's major players even confessed privately to me that they felt the music sometimes trampled on the drama.

It didn't help that Nyman, who is currently recognised (and doubtless resented) as one of the most successful screen composers of the era, seems not to have laboured over an original score, but merely to have dusted off a few hundred yards of second-hand material. Some of the *Carrington* score comprises segments from Nyman's 'Third String Quartet', originally written as a choral piece for a BBC documentary on the Armenian earthquake and later adapted to celebrate the Rumanian Revolution. While editing the film, Hampton had used these pieces as a 'temp track' which he intended Nyman to replace in the finished version. But as Nyman proudly states: "I realised it was doing a better job than anything new I could possibly come up with. I wouldn't be able to improve on it, so we decided to leave it in."

Despite earnest attempts in the *Carrington* soundtrack album press notes to suggest that this remains a new work (with talk of some segments being "developed from" the 'Third Quartet', of the music being organised in terms of *Carrington*'s distinct characters, and of musical references to the movie's pastoral imagery) it is hard to avoid the suspicion that laziness played a part in the score's creation. Even such respected film composers as Ennio Morricone are not above plagiarising their own back catalogues in order to turn around a fast score. Nyman himself has been prolific in the recent past, winning well-deserved

plaudits for his music for Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, before rising to international superstardom with his score for *The Piano*. Although snubbed at the Oscars, Nyman's music provided the backbone of Jane Campion's acclaimed art-house hit, and became one of the few 'incidental' soundtrack albums to cross-over into the mainstream pop market.

In the light of such successes, knowledge of the music's genesis makes one view the movie with a more critical eye. Knowing that the score has been lifted from another project makes the musical cues sound intrusive, inauthentic and alien to the landscape of the drama itself. Yet such an apparently informed reaction is itself a trick, an illusion, a mischievous deceit. Because, in the absence of prior historical knowledge, Nyman's music for *Carrington* is (as both Nyman and Hampton claim) both awe-inspiring and bizarrely suited to the material. When I first saw the movie, I heard a sensuous, brooding and proudly melancholic musical undercurrent which swept the viewer up into the tragically passionate world of the movie's protagonist. I even scribbled "bloody marvellous music" on my reviewer's pad.

Had I known during that first viewing where the music had come from, I would almost certainly not have enjoyed such a reaction. I suspect that I would have flinched at the thought of just another off-the-peg Nyman score. And that is exactly what I thought when I saw the film the second time armed with a barrage of information about the score's history. I can no longer distinguish between these two opposing reactions. The first wave of enthusiasm I know to be naive, ill-informed, and frankly less than critical. But the informed response I know to be a lie. The more I listen, the more I think I was right the first time round. Michael Nyman's *Carrington* score is only an 'off-cut' to those who have researched its background – to the novice, open-minded listener it is a terrific piece of work which beautifully complements the tumultuous emotions of the characters. For ignorance really is bliss.

secret electronic bugs, a NATO officer is murdered in his hotel bedroom and his wife is framed for the killing. Kitsch comedy-thriller which owes as much to *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* as to Hitchcock. Greek locations lend affairs a sunny exoticism. Chabrol clearly enjoys the gadgetry and general tomfoolery and Jean Seberg is a fetching heroine, but this is flimsy, forgettable stuff. (MFB No. 422)

The Scoundrel (Les Maries de l'an deux)

Jean-Paul Rappeneau; France 1971; Arrow Video; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15 Bawdy historical romp set shortly after the French Revolution and directed in energetic, but determinedly frivolous style by Rappeneau. Jean-Paul Belmondo is the scoundrel of the title, a dashing blade forced to leave France and flee to America after killing an aristocrat in a duel. Rappeneau's chaotic, kinetic approach to the material recalls Tony Richardson's equally messy, equally entertaining *Tom Jones*. (MFB No. 457)

Seven Brides for Seven Brothers/Show Boat

Stanley Donen/George Sidney; USA 1954/1951; MGM/UA Home Video; £14.99; Certificate U (MFB Nos. 251/210)

The Unforgiven

John Huston; USA 1959; MGM/UA; £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate PG (MFB No. 317)

La Vie de château

Jean-Paul Rappeneau; France 1965; Arrow Video; £15.99; B/W; Subtitles; Certificate 12 A resistance hero and a Nazi officer vie for the affections of beautiful bored Catherine Deneuve, but her husband is determined to hold onto her. This whimsical comic variation on the country house drama, set in a sprawling French château shortly before the D-Day landings, is an unlikely delight. The script, in which Claude Sautet had a hand, combines slapstick, sight gags and outrageous coincidence with a strong vein of pastoral lyricism. (MFB No. 401)

Retail premiere

Caméra Afrique/Caméra Arabe

Ferid Boughedir; Tunisia 1983/1987; Academy Video; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate E; 95 minutes/62 minutes; Producer Ferid Boughedir; Screenplay Ferid Boughedir The first of these documentaries is an



Solitary prisoner: 'Mary Forever'

impassioned, implicitly angry affair, bemoaning the fact that it took more than 60 years after the birth of the movies for African cinema to assume its place on the world stage. There is depressing information on the way foreign suppliers exploited African audiences, off-loading cheap, exploitative western films while doing nothing to foster indigenous production. There are interviews with the likes of Med Hondo and Ousmane Sembene, and clips from many great African films. The second documentary tells the story of "the young Arab cinema," explaining why Egyptian song and dance movies dominated Arab cinema for so long. It registers the effect seismic outside events such as the Six Day War had on Arab film-makers, and charts the emergence of new talents like Nouri Bouzid and Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud.

Quiet Days in Clichy (Jours tranquilles à Clichy)

Claude Chabrol; France/Italy/West Germany 1989; Art House; £12.99; Certificate 18; 100 minutes; Producer Lawrence Schiller; Screenplay Ugo Leonzio; Lead actors Nigel Havers, Andrew McCarthy, Anna Galina Chabrol went wrong at the casting stage; the idea of Andrew McCarthy, clean-cut, ingenuous brat-pack hero playing a lecherous old literary goat along the lines of Henry Miller is misconceived. British sitcom star Nigel Havers is equally uncomfortable as his photographer friend. The Parisien demi-monde they occupy is ersatz decadent, a city more rooted in nostalgic imagination than in any kind of reality.



Paris of the imagination: Claude Chabrol's 'Quiet Days in Clichy'

SOUNDTRACKS...

Thousands of titles on CD. Europe's Largest Stockists of Imports, New Releases and Rare Deletions.

FILM MEMORABILIA...

Thousands of Film Posters (latest releases and older films), T-Shirts, Movie-star Calendars, Postcards, Still Sets, Magazines, Books and Toys.

LASERDISC...

Superior Picture Quality, Digital Stereo Sound and Widescreen Format, make LaserDisc the Collector's Choice. Thousands of imported NTSC discs available, with over 1000 titles in stock.

VIDEOS...

Thousands of Sell-thru titles available on VHS only. Latest releases and all currently available titles.

CATALOGUES...

For Each Separate Mega-mail Catalogue please send either a Cheque or P.O. for £2.50 (£5.00 for all four), or 4 IRC's (overseas).



MOVIE BOULEVARD LTD.

Dept. 55C

3 CHERRY TREE WALK LS2 7EB ENGLAND
TEL: 0113 242 2888 FAX: 0113 243 8840



COMPLETE COLLECTIONS PURCHASED

BOOKS BOUGHT & SOLD
on the arts & social sciences
including *FILM STUDIES*



*"Combination of cheap
books and quality reading"*
Bookshops of London

*"An eclectic mix of second-
hand, remaindered and out
of print books"*

Venue Magazine

**UNSWORTH RICE
& COE**

12 Bloomsbury St, London WC1

Tel 0171 436 9836 &

71 Park Street, Bristol BS1

Tel 01179 299991

Please phone for details
OPEN EVERY DAY

OFFSTAGE



LONDON'S ONLY SPECIALIST

**THEATRE
AND FILM
BOOKSHOP**

**SEND FOR FREE
MEDIA BOOKLISTS**

37 CHALK FARM ROAD,
CAMDEN TOWN, LONDON,
NW1 8AJ

071 485 4996

**MAIL ORDER SERVICE
AVAILABLE**

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK



WHITE GUYS



FRED PFEIL

White Guys

Studies in Postmodern
Domination and Difference

What do white straight men want? Fred Pfeil's investigation of American popular culture exposes the contradictions in the construction of white heterosexual masculinity over the last fifteen years. *White Guys* probes such topics as the rock'n'roll bodies of Bruce Springsteen, Axl Rose, and the late Kurt Cobain; the 'male rampage' films *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon* and the films of 'sensitive transformation' that followed in their wake; and the curious yet symptomatic activities of the men's movement whose 'rituals' Pfeil has investigated firsthand.

'Provocative and frequently amusing.'
Sight and Sound

'A formidable, necessary book.'
Ikon

£12.95 paperback



STEVEN KLINE

Out of the Garden

Toys, TV and Children's Culture
in the Age of Marketing

'A highly disturbing analysis of children's play ever since toys became big business... an insight into the role of marketing and television that no parent can afford to ignore.'
The Times

'An interesting and provocative book. It alerts and sensitises one to things which should have been obvious but weren't - like the increasingly sinister co-ordination between media products and the toy industry.'
The Observer

£11.95 paperback

6 Meard Street
London W1V 3HR

cineastes/ buffs

books
stills
music
mags

catalogue subscription:
£1.00 (7-IRCs)

decorum books(ss)
24 Cloudesley Sq.
London N1

FILM PRODUCTION COURSE

Learn by shooting a film under the supervision of top professionals at the only London feature film production studio offering training.

The Panico Media Workshop is a charity set up by established film technicians in order to provide training and work experience for those wishing to enter the film industry.

The Film Production Course comprises of 40 hours of tuition and practical exercises held on weekends or evenings. During this time you will learn the essential aspects of film making by writing and shooting your own production with other students.

PANICO WORKSHOP

On successful completion of the course, you may join the Panico Workshop. This will give you access to the equipment, facilities, advice and further training which is available at Panico Studio, enabling you to make your own productions.

Write or telephone for our brochure.

PANICO STUDIO

11 Lakonberg Court, London W1V 5LG,
Tel: 0171 734 5120



Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 0171 436 2327. e-mail address: S&S@bfi.org.uk

International humour

From Robert Davies

With respect to Andy Medhurst's eloquent and incisive article on Peter Chelsom's *Funny Bones* (S&S October). I would like to draw attention to his curious argument that Thora Hird has more "national specificity" than Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*.

However, the Blackpool presented in Chelsom's film is itself a specific representation of northern sea-side culture. The funny bone I would like to pick, therefore, is that we should ask ourselves (as thoughtful viewers) how nationally specific the film really is. As a twentysomething working-class northerner, I found Chelsom's vision of Blackpool to be somewhat inconsistent with the experiences I have of visiting it. Where were the modern hi-tech rides? The spivs selling plastic lucky charms? The fake turds? The fart bags and Nolan sisters (no connection intended)? However, I found the film immensely enjoyable, for reasons other than national specificity. How nationally specific is Blackpool anyway? Surely it cannot be too dissimilar to the vaudeville environment of Coney Island at the turn of the century?

Having first seen *Funny Bones* in Berlin, I noticed that my *émigré* friend – who is himself a thirtysomething from Blackpool – was revelling in the film's nostalgic specificities. The young (multicultural) Berlin audience, on the other hand, seemed more impressed with the film's international specificities (in other words, comedy). As Medhurst hinted, it is the humour and emotional conflicts (between characters) which can transcend the film's local pleasures for an international audience. Any cultural or nostalgic constructions are thus rendered subservient to the narrative and dramatic devices that work so well throughout the film. The specifics of our Great British culture are more convoluted and diffuse than our nationalistic assumptions lead us to believe. Given the choice, I would rather have coffee with Quentin Tarantino than scones with Thora Hird, thank you.

Stoke-On-Trent, Staffs

Blue heaven

From Ian D. Smith, producer, *'Live Blue Roma'*, James Mackay, producer, *'Blue'*

We were delighted to see our new album *Live Blue Roma* reviewed in *Sight and Sound* (September 1995). However a couple of points in Mark Kermode's piece were possibly misleading and we would like the opportunity to put these right.

Live Blue Roma (CD Stumm 149) is not a film soundtrack album but part of a much wider *Blue* project: a long series of concerts that pre-date the film by some years. The concerts from which *Live Blue Roma* was compiled took place in July 1993, shortly after the film was completed. This is not an album of "words by Derek Jarman performed live to the strains of Turner's ambient musical accompaniment" but an improvisation by a group of musicians and

performers using the elements on which the film is based. Each concert is unique and includes not only material that was incorporated into the film, but other texts and poetry by Derek Jarman and John Quentin that was not. The concerts and the album are not performances of the film soundtrack and are not intended to be experienced as such. (The original soundtrack to *Blue* is also available on Mute Records, CD Stumm 49.)

Basilisk Communications Ltd, London W1P

Fifteening

From Jonathan Clements, translator

'Kekkou Kamen'

I was heartened to see S&S devoting some space to the ongoing anime censorship controversy (S&S October) but slightly confused by Richard Falcon's concluding paragraph. *Kekkou Kamen* is indeed a satire of sexual mores and oppressive schooling in contemporary Japan, but Falcon's analysis of the theme song seemed to imply that my translation was somehow unfaithful.

There are incidences of gratuitous bad language in anime translations, but not in the soft-porn releases of the two independents he mentions. Instead, I suggest he turn his attention to the phenomenon of 'fifteening', in which certain English-language anime distributors (and most emphatically not the translators they employ) will add bad language to innocuous titles to match certification to preferred customer base.

But to return to *Kekkou Kamen*, perhaps Falcon would care to comment on the theme song to *Kekkou Kamen 2*, which reads (in Japanese): "Are wa shiri da, shiri da, shiri da." This translates quite literally as "Look at the arse on that, arse on that, arse on that." In this context, I find the 'Viz-style' translation most appropriate. Would Falcon agree that not only is Viz an acceptable model for this kind of satire, but that it would also be a disservice to the author's original intent were I to translate the lyrics into, say, the classical cadences of Kurosawa's *Ran*?

London E11

Multicultural England

From Des Brown

I agree with your editorial *England Calling* (S&S October) that the term 'British' cinema has past its sell-by date. It is an over-generous misnomer, for ours is very much an English, not a British, cinema.

Forthcoming films such as *Sense and Sensibility*, *In the Bleak Midwinter* and *Richard III* are deeply English in concerns, themes and locations, as are the recent *The Madness of King George*, *Priest*, *Carrington*, *The Young Poisoner's Handbook* and *Land and Freedom*, none of which owe much to the Celtic countries of the British Isles. Film-making in Scotland and Wales is spasmodic, and often these film cultures act like satellites around the dominant English one. Take the 'Welsh' *The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill But Came Down A Mountain*: made by English producers and an English production company with a mostly English cast occupying the principal roles and an English production team with post-production completed in England.

Up in Scotland, *Braveheart* has been adopted by the nationalist cause, yet the film has few Scottish elements – it is an

American production shot mostly in Ireland with a largely non-Scottish cast. Compare this to *First Knight*, another Middle-Ages epic, only this time based on the English warrior King Arthur. This was filmed mostly in England with English leads (Julia Ormond, Ben Cross), an English screenwriter (William Nicholson) and English production designer (John Box). It can make a more legitimate claim to be part of English cinema than *Braveheart* can to be part of a Scottish one.

Even attitudes to film in the two countries are different, with Scottish film criticism and culture heavily Francophile (the Scots will over-praise any French import above the English one); in England we are nowadays less enamoured of French cinema and frequently dismissive.

Certainly the definition of an English cinema would include those multi-national productions shot in English studios by English film-makers (*Mary Reilly*, *Judge Dredd*) as well as those English productions shot overseas (*An Awfully Big Adventure*, *Land and Freedom*, *Much Ado About Nothing*) for reasons of either story or budget – an English cinema which is inclusive rather than exclusive. In this respect, English cinema is probably an accurate mirror on the multicultural traveller nation we are.

Newcastle Upon Tyne

Outrageous video pricing

From Andy Waller

Two points of concern, relating to the sell-through video industry in the UK.

1. The increasing cost of sell-through titles. A price-tag of £14.00/15.99 is perhaps understandable for a specialist release, since such a film will appeal to a limited group and only a higher price will make it viable. However, increasingly, big-budget mainstream titles (such as *True Romance* and *Speed*) are going out at the same price. Why?

2. Widescreen releases. While it is pleasing to see that distributors are now releasing widescreen prints of a limited number of features on cassette (most recently, *Pulp Fiction*, *Speed*, and most specialist tapes), it is unfortunate that more films are not being released in their original aspect ratios as a matter of course. A widescreen version should not be regarded as a connoisseur's or buff's format, but simply as the original, correct version of a film. Although I certainly do not condone censorship, it is laughable to think of the amount of fuss made about a few seconds cut from a video release, compared to the amount removed by the reduction of a film to the 1.33:1 television ratio. In the case of a Panavision/cinemascope picture (2.35:1), if I am not mistaken, surely one is losing almost 50 per cent, of image and director's vision!

Nottingham

Additions and corrections

September 1995: p.44 The director of *Blue Juice* is Carl Prechezer. p.52 *Hold Me Thrill Me Kiss Me*, the words "I guess killing your sister..." were spoken by Eli not Dannie.

October 1995: *Nine Months* certificate 12, 9,286 feet, 103 minutes; p.58 *Pocahontas*, the real Pocahontas later sailed to England not with Smith but another Englishman, whom she married.

Sight and Sound

Back issues and binders

Sight and Sound

Most issues dating back to the relaunch of Sight and Sound are available.

● Price per copy including post and packing:

UK £3.20

Europe £3.60

Overseas airmail £4.90

Sight and Sound binders

Each binder holds a year's issues.

● Price including post and packing:

UK £8.00

Europe £9.40

Overseas airmail £12.00

Monthly Film Bulletin

Many issues are still available dating back to 1970.

● Price per copy including post and packing:

UK £2.50

Europe £2.80

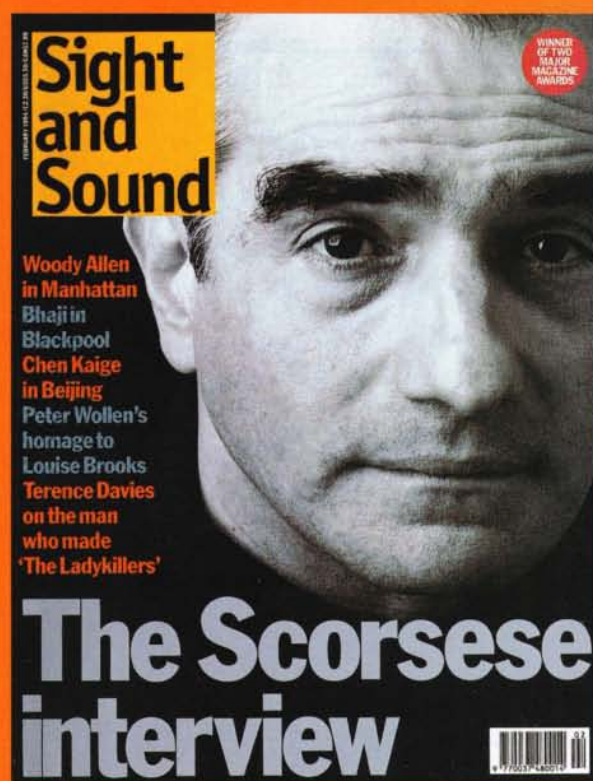
Overseas airmail £3.50

How to order

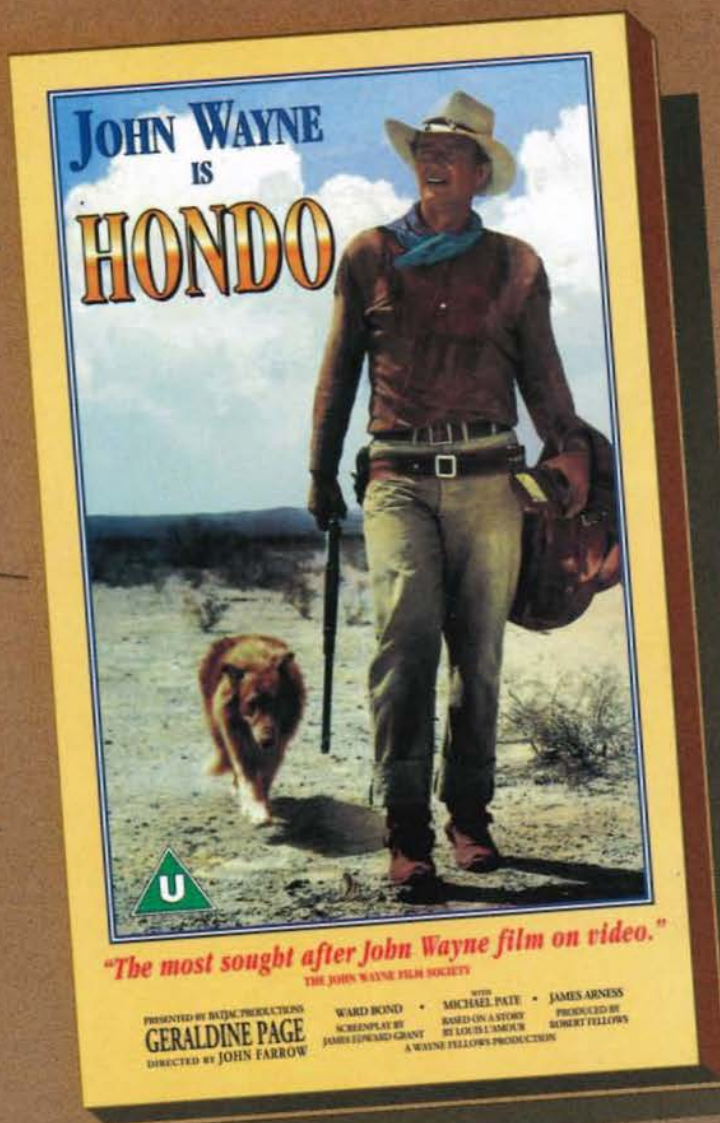
To order by credit card or for more information call 0858 468888.

To order by post, send your cheque payable to the British Film Institute to:

Sight and Sound back issues
Tower House
Sovereign Park
Market Harborough
Leicestershire, LE16 9EF, UK



LOST AND FOUND



John Wayne is
"Hondo Lane"

Now's your chance to
own John Wayne's most
sought after film ever!

Not seen in Britain for
over 17 years, the classic
western "Hondo"* is
now available on video
for the very first time.

**AVAILABLE ONLY
ON VIDEO**

OUT NOW FROM ALL GOOD VIDEO STOCKISTS

*HONDO has been digitally remastered in Hi-Fi stereo and restored frame by frame by The Estate of John Wayne

